



the weekly Standard

MARCH 26, 2018

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Television Overload

So many great shows, but who will remember them?

BY SONNY BUNCH



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Contents

March 26, 2018 • Volume 23, Number 28



- 2 The Scrapbook *The Obamas as TV producers, the ‘romance community,’ & more*
- 5 Casual *Joseph Epstein says hello to Dolly*
- 6 Editorials *The CIA Gets a Strong Woman • May Takes on Putin*
- 8 Comment
- Good news in Foggy Bottom* BY STEPHEN F. HAYES
- Trump’s top economics guy: Kudlow finally gets the nod* BY FRED BARNES
- A guide for the gender-perplexed* BY ANDREW FERGUSON
- The school walkout: a conformist rebellion* BY BARTON SWAIM
- Chaotic energy in the executive* BY TERRY EASTLAND

Articles

- 16 The Heavy Price of Metal Tariffs BY TONY MECIA
Trump’s trade move boosts steelmakers but weighs on everybody else
- 18 The Protectionist’s Protectionist BY MICHAEL WARREN
Peter Navarro overcomes the globalists
- 19 Skunk vs. Skunk BY DAVE SHIFLETT
The defense of the Second Amendment goes down-market
- 21 Anti-Press Gang BY DOMINIC GREEN
Max Mosley and Jeremy Corbyn’s war on the media

Feature

- 25 Like Sheep Among Wolves BY MARK HEMINGWAY
Russell Moore and the evangelical mission in the age of Trump

Books & Arts

- 30 The Great Shows BY SONNY BUNCH
There’s more and better television than ever before—but will any of it last?
- 37 Dazzling Dendrites BY AARON ROTHSTEIN
Beholding the brain, in sketches by the ‘father of neuroscience’
- 39 Lights, Camera, Tesseracton BY JOHN PODHORETZ
The ‘Wrinkle in Time’ movie doesn’t share the book’s transcendental purpose
- 40 Ill Repute BY JAMES BOWMAN
What we talk about when we talk about reputation
- 42 Obituary BY JOHN GRIBBIN
Stephen Hawking, 1942-2018
- 44 Parody *Breaking the news to Rex*

COVER BY DAVE MALAN

Never Say Goodbye

What is it about former Democratic presidents that they can't leave the arena? They leave, then come back, then go quiet for a while, and just when you think you've gotten rid of them they spring back into the headlines again. Jimmy Carter set the example here. For nearly four decades the man's been jetting around the world as though his presidency never ended—meeting with foreign leaders and dictators, offering his services as an election monitor in places where fair elections were certain not to happen, making critical and sometimes acerbic comments about his successors and their policies, insinuating himself into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in unfailingly baleful ways, accepting international awards, and generally making a nuisance of himself.

Bill Clinton similarly finds it difficult to stay away: the television and magazine interviews, the “special envoy” diplomatic missions hither and yon, the speeches at innumerable elite confabs, and of course the constant efforts, both high- and low-profile, to get his intermittently estranged wife elected president.

Republican presidents, by contrast, seem mostly content to let others enjoy the limelight. Occasionally one will offer a vaguely political comment to a reporter, and George W. Bush eventually tried to help his brother's doomed presidential campaign, but otherwise they confine their work to humanitarian projects and writing generous and statesmanlike memoirs.

This may well change when Donald Trump leaves office, but the pattern will likely hold true during the post-presidential career of Barack Obama. We learned last week that Obama and his wife, Michelle, are in the final stages of negotiations with Netflix to produce one or more shows that will allow him to retain his influence on global affairs.

News reports indicated that the

Obamas do not plan to use the Netflix shows to respond directly to the Trump administration but will instead use the new medium to highlight powerful stories. “President and Mrs. Obama have always believed in the power of storytelling to inspire,” the couple's spokesman said. “Throughout their lives, they have lifted up stories of people whose efforts to make a difference are quietly changing the world for the better. As they consider their future personal plans, they continue to explore new ways to help others tell and share their stories.”



It seems to THE SCRAPBOOK that Sally Jessy Raphael and Oprah Winfrey already took that idea about as far as it can go, but we enjoy powerful stories about ordinary people changing the world for the better, and we wish the Obamas well in their new television-production careers.

But hold on. The *New York Times* reports that the Obamas' media venture may not be the apolitical project we would prefer. “In one possible show idea,” the *Times* reports, “Mr. Obama could moderate conversations on topics that dominated his presidency—health care, voting rights, immigration, foreign policy, climate change—and that have continued to divide a polarized American electorate during President Trump's time in office. Another program could feature Mrs. Obama on topics, like nutrition, that she championed in the White House.”

If we may be forgiven for saying so, these ideas don't sound like

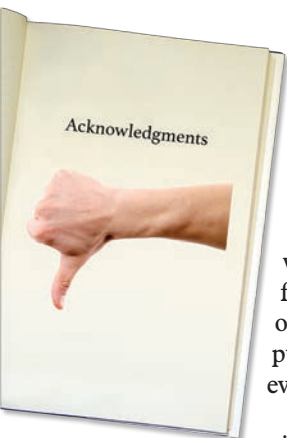
ratings sensations. They sound like PBS's *Washington Week*, only less exciting. The very thought of listening to Obama drone on about climate change or health care is itself a kind of soporific.

The point isn't that we don't want to hear Obama anymore—okay, maybe that is the point. We watched and listened to him for eight solid years, and we don't want to think about him anymore. That's not all his fault—it's the nature of the postmodern presidency, which for a variety of reasons requires presidents to speak in public forums vastly more often than presidents did in former times. No day passes anymore in which a president's name and utterances are nowhere to be found in the news.

The result is that, after just two or three years on the job, even the president's sympathizers get tired of hearing from him and about him all the time. But perhaps Obama's sympathizers will feel differently. We hope they enjoy more of the 44th president's dulcet tones discussing “topics that dominated his presidency.” We'll be watching something else. Anything else. ♦

Thanks and No Thanks

From Bryan Curtis, editor-at-large of the sports website *The Ringer*, THE SCRAPBOOK learned of an unusual passage in the acknowledgments section of William Vollmann's 2009 book *Imperial*. In addition to the litany of people who were helpful came this: “The San Diego County Water Authority was rudely unhelpful,” Vollman writes. “I would particularly like to single out the following two unpleasant individuals: John Liarakos, the so-called public affairs officer, who never returned a single phone call, and Dana Frieauf or Fridhof—she never verified the spelling of her name—who required that



I put questions to her in writing, then never answered a single one in spite of many requests.”

Reporters everywhere will know the feeling. Evasive, nasty, or otherwise unhelpful public servants are their ever-present companions.

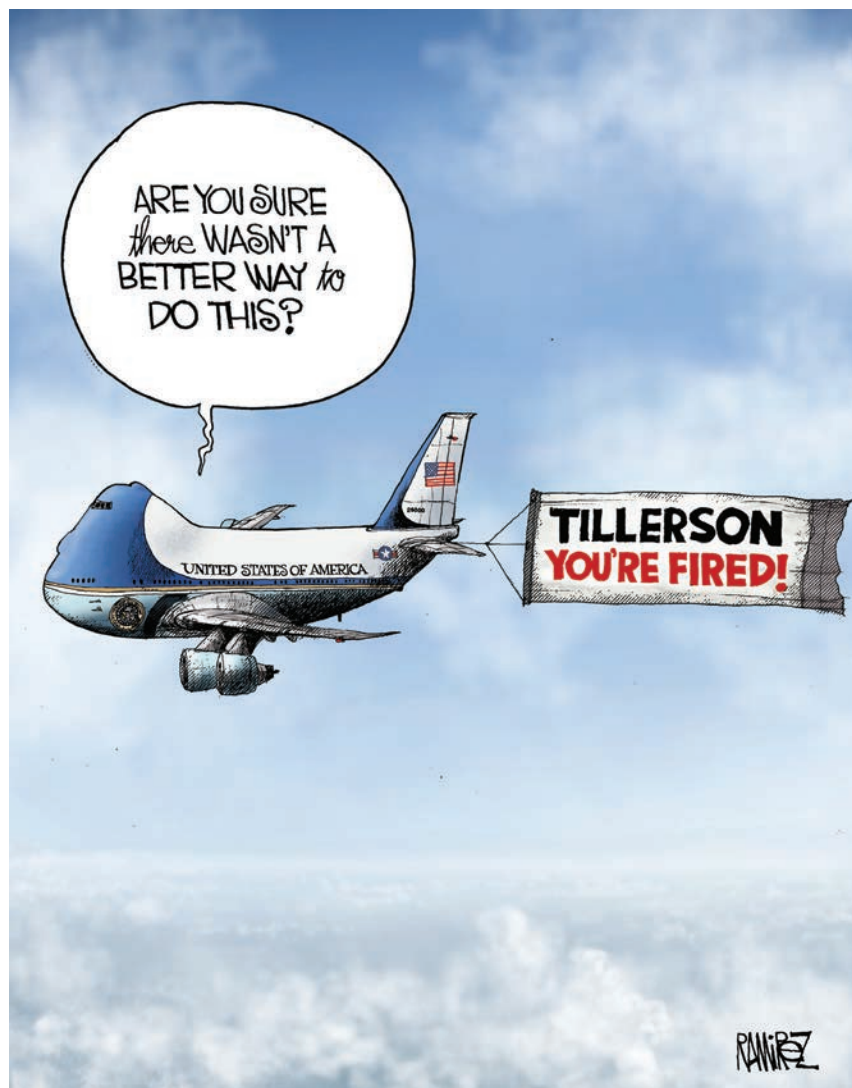
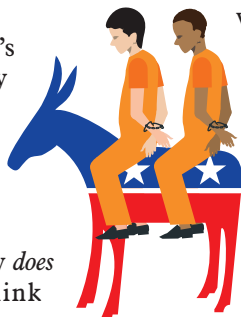
We were also put in mind of a little gift book by Sandra Boynton titled *Chocolate: The Consuming Passion*. Her acknowledgments section reads as follows: “There are many people without whom this book would have been impossible. There are many others without whom it would have been a hell of a lot easier.” ♦

One Inmate or Child, One Vote

In a recent *New York Times* op-ed, Temple University professor of psychology Laurence Steinberg argues that “the federal voting age in the United States should be lowered from 18 to 16.” The bulk of Steinberg’s piece is devoted to explaining why teenagers aren’t the empty-headed narcissistic doofuses they’re often assumed to be. “Studies of cold cognition,” he writes, “have shown that the skills necessary to make informed decisions are firmly in place by 16.”

Maybe so, maybe so. But when he insists that more teenagers voting is necessary for our civic virtue, we become a little dubious. “Why is higher turnout among 16- and 17-year-olds so important?” he asks. “Because there is evidence that people who don’t vote the first time they are eligible are less likely to vote regularly in the future.”

Huh? Assuming that’s true, how would merely changing the age of eligibility make people more likely to vote in the future? It wouldn’t. But of course that’s not the point. Well, then, why does Professor Steinberg think



allowing 16-year-olds to vote is so vital for the future of our republic? THE SCRAPBOOK has enough respect for our readers to assume they know the answer without our explaining it.

Meanwhile, in Chicago, the Cook County Jail held its first-ever jail-wide, in-person voting process. Most of the inmates were eligible to vote, reports WLS, Chicago’s ABC affiliate, and Rev. Jesse Jackson was on hand to lend his moral support.

“The program,” we learn, “is part of an effort to give more people in the criminal justice system the ability to vote.” We’re certain that the effort to get more inmates

to cast their votes has everything to do with the public spiritedness of Chicago-area public officials and nothing at all to do with any search for Democratic partisan advantage. ♦

News from the ‘Romance Community’

New from the publishing industry: Crimson Romance, Simon & Schuster’s “diverse romance” imprint, recently announced on Twitter that it will close. The *Book Riot* blog reports: “The Ripped Bodice, a Los Angeles romance bookstore whose owners recently published a report on the state of diversity in the genre, retweeted the announcement, noting that Crimson



Romance is the only romance publisher that published at least 25% books by authors of color last year (the next highest was 12.6%). Members of the romance community expressed their disappointment in the decision.”

We’re awfully glad to know that the “romance community,” like other communities, is equipped with its own diversity watchdogs, ready and able to publish reports on the number of minority or otherwise marginalized practitioners it generates.

The same day we read the sad news about *Crimson Romance*, the *Guardian* reported that romance authors—the vast majority of whom, we gather, are female and politically liberal—are having trouble figuring out how to write alpha-male-dominated stories in the era of Donald Trump. “I woke up on 9 November [2016] and I was like, ‘I can’t write another one of these rich entitled impenetrable alphas. I just can’t,’” says famed romance author Sarah MacLean, who at the time was writing a bodice-ripper that included an aggressive male as one of its two main protagonists.

THE SCRAPBOOK is not a fan of romance fiction, but it would seem pretty difficult to imagine a romance novel without a fairly aggressive manly-man. Hence MacLean’s problem. Her manuscript, she realized in the shock of Trump’s victory, “was the story of that horrible

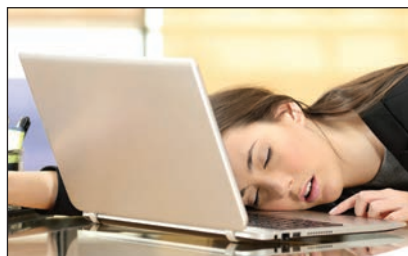
impenetrable alpha evolving through love to be a fully formed human, which is a thing we do a lot in romance. And I just couldn’t see a way in my head that he would ultimately not be a Trump voter.”

Romance is a billion-dollar industry, explains the *Guardian*’s reporter. “Yet, to some,” she writes, having apparently adopted the famously bad writing of the romance genre, “it might seem a jarring relic among the current, wider conversations about sexual politics and gender equality.”

So what did MacLean do? How did she respond to this existential predicament? She called her editor. “I said, ‘I can’t do it.’ It was a bad day. But my editor was also a wreck about the election and understood.” MacLean wrote the entire book, this time with a more nuanced and sensitive male protagonist. But the author wasn’t satisfied with the result: “I was like, ‘I can’t even stomach this guy, he’s not sexy.’”

We shudder to think of the literary masterpieces that will never be written. We’re like, “Oh great, now Trump’s ruining our bodice-rippers, too!” ♦

Sentences We Didn’t Finish



‘It’s easy to look at what’s happening in Washington DC and despair. That’s why I carry a little plastic Obama doll in my purse. I pull him out every now and then to remind myself that the United States had a progressive, African American president until very recently. Some people find this strange, but . . .’ (former *New York Times* executive editor Jill Abramson, “Are We Seeing Signs of a Democratic Wave in the Primaries?” the *Guardian*, March 7). ♦

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Hello, Dolly

Ever since Michel de Montaigne noted that he couldn't be sure whether he was playing with his cat or his cat was playing with him, an essayist without a cat has seemed like a Hasid without a hat. Or so I came to conclude a month or so after our charming calico cat Hermione died one sad evening in our living room. Hermione's death was jolting, and I thought that this was it, who needs the trouble, no more pets, no more livestock *chez* Epstein. I, though, apparently need the trouble, or at least welcome it. How else explain late one afternoon finding myself turning in to the Evanston Animal Shelter in search of another cat?

The Abbé Mugnier, the *belle époque* priest, friend to so many of the French writers of his day, was once asked how he, so gentle a man, could believe in hell with all its terrible tortures. "I believe in hell because my faith tells me I must," he replied, "but I don't have to believe there is anyone in hell." My condition as a pious agnostic is to believe in heaven if only because the people who work at animal shelters, so many of them as volunteers, deserve a place there at life's end.

At the Evanston Animal Shelter I met one of them, a volunteer named Christine Garvey. She walked me round the back where the cats, sitting in small individual cages, were sheltered. I was taken straightaway by another calico, sitting in her cage with what seemed to me stoical patience. Ms. Garvey brought her out to what was, in effect, a visitor's room, for me to inspect her. The cat, whose name was Dolores, had short legs, a rich thick coat, and a figure that was,

to borrow from the Yiddish for curvaceous women, *zaftig*, without in Dolores's case the sensuous part. We spent 10 or so minutes alone, Dolores and I, just long enough for me to note how different, physically and temperamentally, she was from the lithe and lively Hermione. I left without committing myself.

On my second visit to the shelter I decided that Dolores was the cat for me. She was eight years old and thus not in great demand, for most people



want kittens. All that is known of her history is that her previous owner left her one night in her carrier at the door of the shelter. I neglected to ask how long she had been confined in her cage at the shelter.

The first change in Dolores's life once she arrived at our apartment was, at my wife's sensible suggestion, a name change. The too-dolorous name of Dolores was changed to Dolly. Much better. The two, wife and pussycat, hit it off immediately. "Sisterhood," as I have noted innumerable times seeing them companionly seated on the couch together, "is powerful." Dolly, a middle-age cat, turned out to be in every way the perfect fit for two beyond middle-age people.

When visitors remark on Dolly's girth, I tell them that she is "one of those fat cats from city hall." Owing to her amplitude, she doesn't jump any higher than our couches or our bed. A favorite spot of hers is the top of one of our couches, from where she can view the outside world, though she is otherwise curiously incurious. She spends most evenings between us on this same couch, napping and tolerating our stroking her as various English detectives work on complicated cases on the television set before the three of us. Her influence is becalming.

In the early morning, once I settle into my chair with tea and toast and a book, Dolly comes round, signals her wish to be lifted onto my lap, and takes a 20-or-so-minute petting as we both look out onto the darkened street below. I think of various writing projects I have before me, she of—who knows?—the jungle she has never known, her good fortune at being out of the cage at the shelter, the strange gray-haired creature in his pajamas who doesn't seem to tire of petting her.

All Dolly's days are the same: beginning on the lap of the gray-haired guy, a six-or-seven-minute brushing, five morning cat treats, a bowl of ice water and another of dry food to snack on throughout the day, naps, countless naps, sometimes broken up with a brief workout with cat toys, until the day ends with five more cat treats, and then off to bed to sleep near her sorority sister, as I have come to think of my wife. She's been with us 19 months now, Dolly, and in her quiet way has so perfectly insinuated herself among us that life without her wouldn't seem anywhere near so pleasant. "So take her wrap, fellas / Find her an empty lap, fellas / Dolly's never goin' away again."

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

The CIA Gets a Strong Woman

On March 13, President Donald Trump fired Secretary of State Rex Tillerson—via Twitter—and replaced him with the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Mike Pompeo. The choice of Pompeo to lead the State Department is an excellent one. At Langley, he earned the respect of a bureaucracy deeply skeptical of the president. His foreign-policy qualifications from his three terms in the House of Representatives are beyond reproach. And he understands (as many secretaries of state have not) that the aim of our foreign policy is not to make the world's diplomatic elite love and appreciate the United States.

An equally important and encouraging part of Trump's shake-up is his nomination of Pompeo's deputy, Gina Haspel, to lead the CIA.

She is a career intelligence officer and has served as CIA station chief in locations around the globe, including the crucial London station. Her integrity and skill are unchallenged. She has, moreover, a reputation for impartiality. The capacity to separate one's political views from one's duties is crucial in most high-level government work, but particularly in the clandestine services. By all accounts Haspel is apolitical. Or at least no one seems to know what her politics are.

Yet she will not be portrayed as the superbly competent public servant she is by the media and her congressional detractors in the weeks to come. Already Haspel's critics have begun attacking her as a shadowy grand inquisitor with no regard for international norms or common decency; the menacing terms "black site," "torture," "waterboarding," "interrogation," and "dark chapter" will hang about her confirmation hearings as they did in the first media reports about her nomination.

A *Washington Post* reporter, Erica Werner, called Haspel a "torture overseer" the moment her nomination became public. (The tweet has since been deleted.) The

Daily Beast wrote of the CIA detention center in Thailand supposedly overseen by Haspel as a "torture laboratory." Kentucky senator Rand Paul, mixing his characteristic sanctimony with carelessness, called her a "cheerleader for waterboarding" and related an anecdote in which a CIA station chief mocks an al Qaeda detainee during an interrogation. The story comes from James E. Mitchell's book *Enhanced Interrogation*, and Mitchell attributes this conduct to an unnamed man, not to Gina Haspel.

The ultimate source of these libels is a 2014 report produced by the Democratic staff of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. The Feinstein Report, as it's known, claimed to be an objective analysis of the CIA's detention and interrogation programs in the years after September 11, 2001. It was much more a political stunt. CIA employees named in the report, up to and including former director Michael Hayden, were made to sign nondisclosure agreements merely

for the privilege of reading the allegations against them. Other than the report's executive summary, it has never been made public—allowing the debate's most partisan and least informed participants to level wild accusations against Bush administration officials, often without the bother of supporting those accusations with evidence.

Haspel's career details remain unclear (as befits a professional spy), but she was almost certainly associated with the CIA's post-9/11 interrogation program. That the program was flawed is beyond doubt—some abuses took place, the program lacked full accountability, and in certain cases officials tried to exaggerate its effectiveness. But the Feinstein Report's contention that the program's enhanced-interrogation techniques produced no useful information was a brazen lie. So was the report's broad and mostly detail-free claim that the program was characterized by wanton abuse and torture.

The CIA detention program produced valuable intel-



ligence, as former CIA interrogator Jason Beale (a pseudonym) explained in detail in these pages in 2014. Fair-minded people can disagree about whether waterboarding a known terrorist for actionable intelligence on his plans and network is intrinsically immoral. We do not think so. What isn't debatable is that enhanced interrogation produced results. That is why, as Beale pointed out, Barack Obama changed his mind when he became president in 2009. Whereas candidate Obama glibly asserted that "torture" doesn't work because people will "say anything" to make it stop, President Obama shifted his argument: The "core question," he then argued, was "Could we have gotten that same information without resorting to these techniques?"

That is a fair question and one Americans can debate. But Gina Haspel's service is no part of that debate. She

served her country in the tasks assigned to her. As Hayden said to us this week, "Gina did exactly what we asked her to do."

Congressional Democrats will no doubt demand to know every detail of Haspel's role in the interrogation program. Many of the lawmakers who will upbraid her for her association with "torture" and "black sites" knew and approved of the agency's interrogation techniques in 2002 and only feigned outrage years later. Haspel's confirmation hearings will likely turn into a debate about the Bush administration's handling of the war on terror. Republicans on the Senate Intelligence Committee had better come prepared to challenge their colleagues' exhibitionism. Gina Haspel is a strong and capable woman. She would be the first female to lead the CIA, and we can expect she will do so with great skill and professionalism. ♦

May Takes on Putin

It is highly likely that on March 4 Russia used a military-grade nerve agent in an attempt to kill one of its former spies in the United Kingdom. On March 14, British prime minister Theresa May retaliated by banishing 23 Russian diplomats "who have been identified as undeclared intelligence officers" from her nation's shores.

Sergei Skripal worked as a double agent for Britain in the 1990s, and the Russians hold him responsible for exposing clandestine agents around the globe. Imprisoned in Russia in 2006, he was part of a spy-swap deal in 2010. He is today a British citizen, as is his 33-year-old daughter Yulia, who was also targeted in the Sunday afternoon attack in the city center of Salisbury.

May called this "an indiscriminate and reckless act against the United Kingdom." This is an accurate description of the use of a nerve agent in a highly populated area. Trace amounts of the chemical weapon have been detected around Salisbury, and a British police sergeant, Nick Bailey, is among those injured by it. Sergei and Yulia Skripal remain in critical condition.

The nerve agent, part of a group called Novichok, was developed in the Soviet Union. May asked the Russians to explain how their nerve agent might have ended up in the United Kingdom and if it could have come into someone else's possession. As she reported to the House of Commons, the Russians have provided "no credible explanation that could suggest they lost control of their nerve

agent." Russia denies any culpability for the act, calling accusations of Kremlin involvement "nonsense." Clearly that is a lie.

The flouting of international norms; the use of lethal force to instill fear in dissidents; the readiness to renege on international agreements—these are the telltale signs of Kremlin involvement. The dissident Alexander Litvinenko fled Russia in 2000 and became a strident critic of Vladimir Putin. In 2006, he mysteriously ingested polonium-210 with his tea in London and died three weeks later. When the Russian opposition politician and democracy campaigner Vladimir Kara-Murza stepped up his criticisms of the Putin regime, he was poisoned twice, once in 2015 and again in 2017. (Kara-Murza survived both attacks.)

At the United Nations on March 14, Nikki Haley pledged that the United States "stands in absolute solidarity with Great Britain." "If we don't take immedi-

ate concrete measures to address this now, Salisbury will not be the last place we see chemical weapons used," she said. "They could be used here in New York or in cities of any country." Assassination has become one of the Kremlin's chief foreign policy tools. The Putin regime kills its enemies without compunction within its own borders and on foreign soil. Whether Putin is trying to frighten those who have opposed him or is simply testing Western nations' resolve, one thing is clear: He shows no signs of relenting. ♦



Theresa May: Russia did it.

STEPHEN F. HAYES

Good news in Foggy Bottom

The conventional wisdom on the firing of Rex Tillerson congealed quickly: He was an ineffective secretary of state who played a crucial role in constraining the president's reckless foreign policy instincts.

This is not just logically impossible, it's also wrong. From the earliest days of his tenure, Trump didn't listen to his diplomat in chief. Tillerson was an adviser whose advice was rarely sought and even more rarely followed. His disputes with the president were widely known—often because Trump took them public—and they made it clear that Tillerson couldn't effectively perform the most elemental part of his job: speaking for the president in public at home and in private abroad.

This is a problem that Tillerson's successor will not have. In the 15 months he's run the Central Intelligence Agency, Mike Pompeo accomplished something few thought possible: He earned both the respect of the CIA workforce and the trust of Donald Trump.

In November 2016, after extending feelers to California representative Devin Nunes, Donald Trump picked Pompeo, a three-term member of the House from Kansas, to be the CIA director. He arrived at Langley facing formidable challenges. He was an elected official, a conservative Republican, a sometime critic of the agency, and, most challenging of all, the appointee of a president with little interest in the kinds of detailed analyses the CIA exists to furnish and a habit of attacking the intel community as a whole.

One of Pompeo's first moves was to call Gina Haspel and ask her to be his deputy. He didn't know her well

but their interactions had always been positive.

In July 2015, Pompeo had traveled to Vienna with Arkansas senator Tom Cotton to investigate reports of secret side agreements to the Iran nuclear deal. On the way, they stopped in London, where they took in a briefing by Haspel, a senior CIA official. Pompeo was impressed and made it a point to remember her name.



The Haspel pick sent an unmistakable message to the CIA's rank and file. Pompeo was willing to absorb political attacks in order to elevate a professional maligned solely for doing her job.

When Pompeo called 16 months later, Haspel expressed reservations, not because she didn't want the job but because she was concerned about the unwelcome political baggage she would bring along. Haspel had been involved in the CIA's enhanced-interrogation program under George W. Bush—a fact sure to make her the object of criticism if she were picked as the CIA's number two. She offered Pompeo names of two possible alternatives. He wasn't interested. He made clear that he wanted Haspel to serve as his deputy and that he was willing to deal with any political blowback.

The pick sent an unmistakable message to the agency's rank and file. Pompeo was willing to absorb political attacks in order to elevate a career intelligence professional

maligned solely for doing her job.

Pompeo also quickly built a strong relationship with Trump. He briefed the president almost daily in a no-nonsense manner, keeping the information simple and straightforward, according to officials familiar with the relationship. More importantly, he managed to avoid the condescension, however understandable, evident from some of Trump's other advisers, including Rex Tillerson.

Mindful of his role, Pompeo tried to limit the briefings to questions of intelligence and analysis. But Trump pushed his CIA director to weigh in on matters of national security policy, and he listened carefully to Pompeo's view of America's role in the world.

"I've seen a dozen times when Pompeo has talked the president out of one of his crazy ideas," says a senior administration official involved in the national security debates.

Pompeo helped shape the administration's approach to thorny national security issues in significant and sometimes surprising ways. Trump brought an instinctive isolationism to his office, particularly about the war in Afghanistan. But in many conversations with Trump, over many months, Pompeo made clear the security risks of simply getting out. When Trump then sought to limit the American presence to a small CIA-led paramilitary force—an idea the president brought up again and again over many weeks—Pompeo patiently disabused him of the fantasy that such a plan would work.

More recently, Pompeo has been urging Trump to explore toughening up the Iran nuclear deal rather than simply tearing it up. Pompeo, a strong and vocal opponent of the deal while he was in Congress, has urged the president to push France, Britain, and Germany to revisit it and demand inspector access to military sites and snapback

sanctions for violations. This is a smart response to Iranian violations. Tillerson rankled Trump with his insistence that the United States remain a party to the deal no matter what.

Where Tillerson simply opposed Trump's views, Pompeo helped to shape them. And he's managed to do

so in a way that Trump doesn't find annoying or disloyal. "Tremendous energy, tremendous intellect," Trump said of Pompeo shortly after tweeting the announcement. "We are always on the same wavelength."

They're not. And that's good. So long as Trump listens. ♦

COMMENT ♦ FRED BARNES

Trump's top economics guy: Kudlow finally gets the nod

Larry Kudlow got blindsided in 2017 when President Trump was putting together his White House staff. He was a Trump loyalist, having announced his support at approximately the moment Trump announced his candidacy. And he and his partner Stephen Moore—both longtime advocates of supply-side, or growth, economics—had crafted Trump's tax cut plan during the campaign. It's the plan that went on to become the framework for the sweeping tax measure enacted in December.

Kudlow appeared wired to become the top economic adviser at the White House, a job that would put him in closer proximity to the president on a daily basis than either the Treasury secretary or the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. Everything seemed to be in place. Then Kudlow didn't get the job.

One day during the transition, Jared Kushner brought a friend by Trump Tower to introduce to his father-in-law. His name was Gary Cohn. He was the COO of Goldman Sachs. Trump was smitten. He suggested Cohn would make a great Treasury secretary, except that job had been taken by Steven Mnuchin. Cohn

got the White House economic job.

If Kudlow was crushed, he never let on. But when Cohn resigned two weeks ago, it was clear Kudlow was still interested in the job. Only



Larry Kudlow knows scores of Republicans in Congress, likes to schmooze with them, and is an architect of a tax cut they love. He's also likely to emerge as one of the few Trump aides who gets along with Democrats.

this time, he would take nothing for granted, not his two-decade relationship with Trump, not his work on the tax plan. Kudlow would fight.

And that meant an effort—a campaign of sorts—to persuade the president to pick Kudlow, 70, was needed. His friends and allies stepped in. They recruited people Trump knows to send him word of their strong support for Kudlow. The tactic succeeded.

An influential endorsement came from Harold Hamm, the Oklahoma oil man, a Kudlow associate said. Hamm is one of Trump's closest friends. Trump listens to him. When he asked Trump to nominate Oklahoma attorney general Scott Pruitt to head the Environmental Protection Agency, Trump said yes without hesitation. Vice President Mike Pence, by the way, is also said to be in Kudlow's corner.

The *Wall Street Journal*, which Trump reads, was another key backer. Its editorial page urged the president to stay away from Christopher Liddell, whom it called "the leading candidate to replace Gary Cohn."

Liddell has been the White House director of strategic initiatives and worked with Jared Kushner's Office of American Innovation. If Trump chooses Liddell, the *Journal* said, "he'll be elevating a former corporate executive without strong free-market views who is unlikely to counter the growing clout of the antitrade corporatists in the Administration."

That probably would have finished Liddell's chances, but they may have already vanished. The day before the editorial ran, Trump called Kudlow to talk about the job, officially known as the director of the National Economic Council (NEC). Two days after that, he offered Kudlow the job.

As it turns out, the president may have been mulling an NEC succession for some time, since Cohn's departure had been anticipated for weeks. A hint of that occurred in late February when the president spoke to Steve Moore at Mar-a-Lago, Trump's Miami club. "You and Larry were with me from the start, and I want you to know I'll always remember it," Moore quoted Trump as saying. Kudlow was on his mind.

Kudlow's career should make him a good fit at the NEC, which combines economics and politics. He was David Stockman's economic adviser in the Reagan days, worked on Wall Street, and hosted a CNBC business show on which he often interviewed Trump.

He has a far different style from Cohn. Kudlow knows scores of Republicans in Congress, likes to schmooze with them, and is an architect of a tax

cut they love. He's also likely to emerge as one of the few Trump aides who gets along with Democrats. As such, he should be an effective salesman and negotiator for Trump. The lingering question is his ability to run the NEC. Management is not his long suit.

Cohn, a Democrat, wasn't popular on Capitol Hill. But he was a strong manager and lured a team of talented economic and financial experts to the NEC. Cohn isn't a Washington type. Kudlow is, or at least acts like one. He'll be on TV a lot. Cohn wasn't.

Megan McArdle wrote in the *Washington Post* last week that those who expect Kudlow's arrival at the White House to "matter much" are mistaken. In one sense, she's right. Big things needed to be done when Trump took office, and more have been (tax cuts, deregulation wave, conservative courts, military buildup) than not (health care). Immigration is on hold.

Kudlow doesn't have the burden of cajoling the president into changing economic policy. Trump has already done that and it shows. Those who sneer at Kudlow because he lacks a Ph.D. ought to explain why the policies of Obama's Ph.D.-laden advisers failed so badly for eight lean years.

I think Kudlow matters. His task is to try as best he can to advise the president how to stay on course. He doesn't decide the course. That is Trump's task. ♦

COMMENT ♦ ANDREW FERGUSON

A guide for the gender-perplexed

I don't know the book acquisition budget of the public library in the town of St. Michaels, a quaint little tourist trap on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. I hope it's large enough to buy several copies of Ryan T. Anderson's new book, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*. Given the strange new world they've been cast into, the patrons will find it useful.

Last week, a U.S. District judge named George L. Russell III declared that the local high school in St. Michaels is violating the rights of a student named Max Brennan, who was born a girl but has decided he is a boy. (Like the parties to the case, judge, defendant, and plaintiff, we'll refer to Max as a boy, for courtesy's sake.) When Max told school authorities about his decision, they did what they could to accommodate him, calling him by his new name and referring to him with masculine pronouns. On Max's behalf, they even subjected school staff to a "professional development workshop" on the subject of transgender students.

Max wasn't satisfied. He wanted to use the boys' locker room when changing clothes for gym class and showering afterwards. The school administration offered him instead the use of a "gender-neutral" restroom where he could change, and gym teachers allowed him additional time to get to class.

Max says he has been "generally accepted and recognized as male" by his classmates. But when he used the restrooms to change clothes, he reported receiving "weird looks."

A gay rights activist group called FreeState Justice volunteered to take the school district to court. Judge Russell agreed that not allowing Max full use of the locker room "harms his health and well-being." Max now has the right to shower with the



In our transgender moment, as author Ryan T. Anderson calls it, bullying is the favored method of advancing the cause. It is, after all, easier than debating a change in government policy.

boys, while the case continues its way through the courts.

Doubtless some parents in St. Michaels are wondering why, all of a sudden, the law requires their sons to shower with a girl, just because the girl says she is a boy. They join many parents around the country under similar circumstances who are wondering the same thing. This is where *When Harry Became Sally* will come in handy.

As the debate about transgender rights is forced upon one community after another, frequently through the cynical deployment of schoolchildren by professional activists, Anderson's book serves as a guide for the perplexed. Sharply argued and admirably brief, it offers a compendium of facts and reasoning for parents and anyone else who seeks confirmation of their moral intuition and common sense.

'Suffer the flummoxed to come unto me'

Ask Matt Labash

at weeklystandard.com

How delighted they will be to discover that they're not crazy after all.

In our transgender moment, as Anderson calls it, bullying is the favored method of advancing the cause. It is, after all, easier than debating a change in government policy. Laymen, ordinary citizens, are generally unaware of the extent to which the vocations of medicine, psychology, and psychiatry have been overrun by cultural warriors, especially through their professional organizations. Politicized psychologists and psychiatrists are quick to flash their guild cards the moment an uncredentialed skeptic questions their "scientific" findings, no matter how implausible.

No less a personage than the director of the Center for Child and Adolescent Gender Care at Duke University, Dr. Deanna Adkins, can make claims like this about "gender identity"—the feeling we all carry within us about whether we are a man or a woman—and face only the mildest dissent from her peers: Gender identity, she declares, is "the only medically supported determinant of sex." In other words, the doctor says, we are what we think we are rather than what we are.

Nobody likes to argue with a doctor. But surely that can't be right, can it? What about chromosomes, genetic makeup, sexual organs? For that matter, what about reality—the world that exists beyond our feelings about the world? Adkins, like her fellow warriors in the transgender cause, doesn't cite research or medical evidence for her claim. That's just as well. For at bottom it is not a medical claim at all. It is a metaphysical claim—an assertion about the nature of what's real. And what is most striking about it is its sheer incoherence.

As he toys around with all the contradictions of transgender ideology, Anderson makes better use of his doctorate in philosophy than Adkins makes of hers in medicine:

Why should feeling like a man—whatever that means—*make* someone a man? Why do our feelings determine reality on the question of sex, but on little else? Our feelings don't

determine our age or our height. . . . If those who identify as transgender *are* the sex with which they identify, why doesn't that apply to other attributes or categories of being? What about people who identify as animals, or able-bodied people who identify as disabled? Do all of these self-professed identities determine reality? If not, why not? . . . The challenge for activists is to explain why a person's "real" sex is determined by an inner "gender identity," but age and height and race and species are not determined by an inner sense of identity.

From the transgender philosophy, Anderson moves on to the strong-arming and shaming tactics of the activists, and from there to the research. In the field of transgenderism, research is sparse. And much of what there is of it is tailored to conclusions that advance the cause. None of it is dispositive for either side.

The mainstream press, which gives lavish space to trans issues on the assumption that they represent the latest stage in the march toward the perfect society, has not been kind to Anderson's book. The *New York Times* ran an op-ed by a professor at Barnard attacking the book even as she refused to name its title, which she called "insulting." (And she's got a point: The one false note in the book is the too-cute title.) When *Harry Became Sally*, she wrote, "suggests that transgender people are crazy, and that what we deserve at every turn is

scorn, contempt and belittlement."

It does nothing of the sort, needless to say; Anderson's sympathy and good faith come through on every page. A *Washington Post* news story criticizing the book didn't even bother to quote Anderson directly, only his critics. (It was later rewritten after an interview with Anderson.) Mostly, though, the press has put the book to one side—maybe a tribute to its strength, but probably because the activists no longer think the argument needs to be joined.

If his book has a weakness, it is that Anderson underestimates the shameless advantage that trans activists take of politeness and good manners—not their own, but those of ordinary people, who sense the suffering of friends and strangers in the grip of gender confusion and who are reluctant to assert the awful claims of reality in the face of it. Most of us will find it far more comfortable to duck the cause altogether and defer to the judgments of the experts, to the lawyers and doctors and judges and journalists, activists all.

And then the girl walks into the boys' shower room and the cause becomes unavoidable. Good manners and good faith are indispensable to democratic disagreement. Intellectual submission is not. Ryan Anderson shows the parents of St. Michaels and elsewhere why deference is unnecessary, and undeserved. ♦

Worth Repeating from *WeeklyStandard.com*:

'Like most people in our seedy little media racket, I'm practiced at pretending to have absolute expertise about things I just started considering roughly a half an hour ago. Knowingness is a hazard of the trade, the way carpenters have Carpenter's Knee or plumbers have Plumber's Crack. Then there's reporting, in which you talk to people who actually know something about what you're pretending to know something about. Also, there's Google, or for those of us who consider it both cheating and dangerous to outsource your brain to a diabolical character like Larry Page, there's Bing.'

—Matt Labash, "*It's OK to Say 'I Don't Know'*"

The school walkout: a conformist rebellion

The school walkout—or to speak correctly, the Enough! National School Walkout—took place on March 14. The point of the event was to call attention to the need for gun-control legislation. Students were to walk out of their classrooms at 10:00 A.M. for 17 minutes to remember the 17 people killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

Thousands of students took part in the nationwide event, which was duly pronounced a success by the enthusiastic news media. The Enough! walkout was planned by the organizers of the 2017 Women's March, and like that event it was hard to know what the aim was or what constituted success. The spectacle of kids standing around in school parking lots instead of sitting in classrooms seems unlikely to pressure state and federal lawmakers to alter their views on gun legislation.

The most passionate among the protester-students—my teenaged daughter holds this view even more firmly than I do—feel strongly about the issue of gun-control precisely because they know hardly anything about it. Which is why, as anybody with a touch of common sense might have predicted, a huge proportion of the walkout participants had no interest in addressing gun violence and mainly enjoyed the chance to get out of class and crack jokes with friends and, for a few, smoke a furtive cigarette or two.

The whole thing, rife as it was with ignorance and emotionalism, put me in mind of a walkout at my own public high school more than 30 years ago. The school's principal had fired the coach of one of the

school's sports teams. The coach was a charming guy, well liked by the kids who knew him, and his team consistently won championships.

A few students demanded to know why he was sacked, but the administration wouldn't say. So those few students (I never knew who they were) planned a walkout on a certain day.

The buildup was intense. How



The whole thing, rife as it was with ignorance and emotionalism, put me in mind of a walkout at my own public high school more than 30 years ago.

many would walk out? How would the administration respond? About half the student body—a thousand people or so, as I remember—walked out onto the school's front lawn and refused to return for about an hour. In the end, the school decreed that the “break period” between classes had been extended for an hour that day, and students who returned after that hour wouldn't be penalized. It worked out nicely for everybody—the students got to feel courageous, and the administrators didn't have to suspend half the school.

I made many poor decisions in high school, but that day I chose not to walk out for the excellent reasons that (a) my father would have verbally thrashed me and (b) I had never known the first thing about the coach and didn't care about his sport. I had

several friends who did walk out, however—despite the fact that they had no more interest in the coach and his team than I did. It wasn't about redressing an injustice or demanding transparency. It was about the *frisson* of pretending to resist authority. And skipping class.

Thirty years later my memory is hazy, so I found the number of the school principal and called her. She was very polite. She still wouldn't reveal the reason for the coach's dismissal, but I assume there was a perfectly legitimate reason for it, and for keeping that reason quiet.

I was a little disappointed, though, that the principal spoke so respectfully of the kids who walked out. “They wanted to express their concerns,” she said, reverting to the disiccated language of a public information officer, “and in the end I think students and administrators were able to better understand the situation.” No, I wanted to say, the students never understood a thing and didn't want to. But I politely agreed.

On March 14, our cultural elites radiated that same determined, irrational optimism. All day social media were abuzz with hats-off testimonials from journalists and politicians to the principled resolve of these young idealists; the evening news hailed them for reinvigorating the gun debate with “fresh passion”; and at least 311 public and private colleges vowed not to penalize future applicants for participating in these peaceful protests.

But a walkout is supposed to be an act of rebellion, of resistance. It involves risk. Like a strike at a factory—if you participate, you might get what you want or you might lose your job. The Enough! walkout was a safe gesture, honored by our governmental and cultural authorities. The national news media—consider the lavish coverage in the *New York Times*—practically begged the kids to go through with it and heaped praise on them when they did.

A more conformist rebellion would be difficult to imagine. These woke revolutionaries simply did what they were told, when they were

told, by faraway professional agitators. Most school districts managed the whole affair into orderly compliance. Our district superintendent, for instance, sent out an email announcing the walkout as if it were part of the curriculum.

Schools “will be recommending age-appropriate resources relative to social studies and English language arts,” she explained. “The walkout can be a learning experience around civic engagement and social responsibility.” A colleague with middle school students in another district received a similar email explaining that students would be allowed to walk out *if* their parents or guardians notified the school and filled out the requisite form.

Perhaps we should be grateful that the walkouts didn’t induce some lunatic attention-seeker to perpetrate yet another act of carnage. That was always the danger—and so it nearly came to pass. After the protest, the principal of my daughter’s high school informed parents in an email that a pair of students were arrested for carrying a gun. News reports the following day confirmed her message. The gun was a Smith & Wesson .380.

Modern American high schools are places of intense conformity. Fear of exclusion cripples and terrorizes its young victims; often you can see it on their faces. They do and think what they’re told. They even protest as they’re told. Some rebellion. ♦



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COMMENT ♦ TERRY EASTLAND

Chaotic energy in the executive

In the course of a week in early March, one of President Trump’s longest-serving aides, Hope Hicks, resigned. One of the president’s most capable economics advisers, Gary Cohn, threatened to resign—and soon did. Son-in-law/presidential adviser Jared Kushner had his security clearance downgraded, though he was not sent packing. The president stewed over whether to fire H.R. McMaster, his national security adviser. And Michael Flynn, the president’s first national security adviser, who resigned early in 2017, indicated his willingness to work with the special counsel in the Russia matter.

The successive events were reported in the media as a White House “in chaos.” Against which Trump said, in a Twitter post:

The new Fake News narrative is that there is CHAOS in the White House. Wrong! People will always come & go, and I want strong dialogue before making a final decision. I still have some people that I want to change (always seeking perfection). There is no Chaos, only great Energy.

The *New York Times* called this “an odd defense for a man who has thrived on chaos and has used it as a way both to organize people and manage them.” That was a fair point, but the *Times*, like most media, didn’t take up Trump’s reference to “energy.”

In ordinary usage, energy means the capacity for vigorous activity. When Trump composed his tweet, he probably had something like that in mind, seeing himself (who else does he see?) as a president of great capacity for such activity.

But energy also happens to be one of the great words of American politics. The Framers understood power not in generic terms but in specific ones—legislative, executive, and judicial power. They vested those powers in Congress, the president, and the judiciary, respectively. And they saw



Trump has overseen plenty of personnel changes. According to a report in the *Washington Post*, he has set a record for ‘turnovers’—the share of top staffers who have left or changed jobs.

“energy in the executive,” in Alexander Hamilton’s famous formulation, as “a leading character in the definition of good government.”

As explained by James Madison in the *Federalist Papers*, “Energy in government [meaning the executive] is essential to that security against external and internal danger and to that prompt and salutary execution of the laws which enter into the very definition of good government.”

And Hamilton, author of the papers in *The Federalist* that covered the presidency, described energy as “essential to the protection of the community against foreign attacks; it is not less essential to the steady administration of the laws; to the protection of property against those irregular and high-handed combinations which sometimes interrupt the ordinary courts of justice; to the security of liberty against the enterprises and assaults of ambition, of faction and of anarchy.”

To secure those ends, the Framers established a structure of government in which there would be a president vested with the executive power who could carry out the powers and duties of office. Hamilton referred to “ingredients” of energy in his discussion of the executive, and just about everything that the Framers did in creating the presidency was done with such ingredients in mind. Even the “duration” in office was an ingredient of energy. As Hamilton explained, the four-year term would mark off adequate time in which a president could undertake “extensive and arduous enterprises” for the public benefit and the people could then judge their efficacy.

The Framers wound up providing for the necessary energy in the executive. Indeed, great energy, Trump could say truly if he were minded to, is what the Framers gave the American people, and it has been enough to sustain the country in times of “chaos” in the White House, and much worse.

The structure of the presidency is not all there is to “energy in the executive.” Decision, activity, secrecy, dispatch, vigor, expedition, prompti-

tude of decision, firmness. These are some of the nouns Hamilton used to explain the energetic executive. They are behavioral terms, reminders of how a president might act in pursuit of good government. For while energy in the executive is about the structure of constitutional government, it is also about those who are elected to it and their decisions and actions—and their responsibility to the people in a system that provides for quadrennial presidential elections, judicial review, and impeachment by Congress.

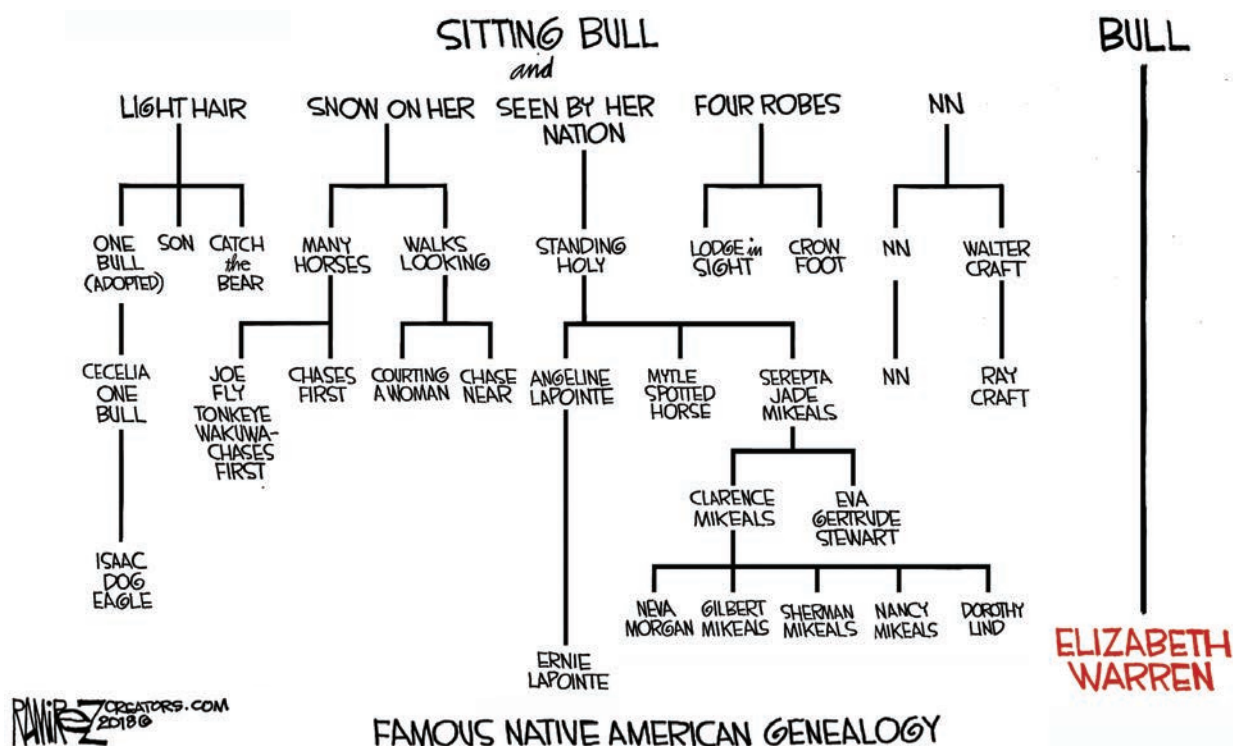
Not surprisingly, the president’s oath of office is the only one spelled out in the Constitution. And in that oath the president, who along with the vice president is the only officer elected by a national vote, is the only officer obligated to execute a particular office. Everyone else in the federal establishment is bound only “to support this Constitution.” The presidency is the unique office, and it is so on account of its energetic character.

Trump has overseen plenty of personnel changes. Indeed, according to a report in the *Washington Post* he has set a record for “turnovers”—the share of top staffers who have left or

changed jobs. For Trump, the number is 43 percent, while for presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush the numbers (over the same period) were much lower.

The truth is, of course, that Trump may have the people working for him that he wants. And last week he fired Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and replaced him with Michael Pompeo, ending the mystery raised in his chaos tweet of whom the president would discharge next as he continued his quest for “perfection.” In 2020, when voters will judge whether the country is better or worse off thanks to Trump, chaos in the White House isn’t likely to be uppermost in their minds as they decide if he should be kept in office or booted out.

President Trump is reputed not to read books. Sad. He has missed some of the best writing ever on the job he has and the government he is trying to administer—the essays that constitute the Federalist Papers and which set forth the case for energy in the executive. Maybe one of his aides who has read *The Federalist* could provide him some tutorials without making the list of “people that I want to change.” ♦



The Heavy Price of Metal Tariffs

Trump's trade move boosts steelmakers but weighs on everybody else. **BY TONY MECIA**

Glenn Sherrill's company buys steel. Tons and tons of steel. So much steel that his grandfather put the word in the company's name when he started it. In the last 60 years, family-owned SteelFab has grown from a small maker of ornamental handrails in Charlotte, N.C., to a large metal fabricator. It buys steel from U.S. mills, cuts or welds it, and then ships it to big construction companies. It has seven plants, in places as far-flung as Texas and Virginia, and about 1,000 employees.

Sherrill worries the steel tariffs announced by the Trump administration will be a big blow to his company and to the construction industry in general. Steel prices have been going up, and Sherrill's suppliers have indicated that the tariffs will enable them to raise prices further. In the short term, SteelFab will be unable to pass the rising costs along to its customers because of contracts guaranteeing a price. In the longer term, though, its products will cost more, and this might dissuade contractors from building or cause them to switch to steel alternatives like concrete.

"The tariffs are really bad for us," he says. "The fear is that steel prices continue to rise and then they increase the overall building cost to a point where developers say, 'Let's just stop. It no longer makes sense to build this building. We're just going to put it on hold.'"

Tony Mecia is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

The tariffs announced by Donald Trump this month—25 percent on steel, 10 percent on aluminum—will have wide-ranging effects. The benefits and costs are already starting to ripple throughout the global econ-



Back to the future: Steelworkers in front of the White House call on George W. Bush to impose tariffs, December 12, 2001.

omy. Our allies are scrambling to cut deals to avoid the levies. Other countries are weighing countermeasures while economists fret about a trade war. U.S. steel producers are ramping up production and hiring more workers. U.S. consumers are facing higher prices for goods with metal in them, from cars to cans of beer. Those feeling the most immediate effects, though, are the companies that buy steel and aluminum.

The new government tax will make foreign metals more expensive, and U.S. steel companies will no longer have to worry about being undercut on price by foreign rivals. Among the largest consumers of steel and aluminum in the United States are metal fabrication companies like SteelFab.

They buy raw material from large U.S. steelmakers such as Nucor, U.S. Steel, and Steel Dynamics and do a wide range of things to it. They punch holes in it, cut it, bend it, shape it, or weld it to something else. Then they send it on to a construction site or to other manufacturers, who make everything from agricultural equipment to railcars to exercise machines.

Unlike steel mills, which are large enterprises, metal fabrication shops tend to be smaller, family-owned businesses, typically with a few dozen to a few hundred employees. Many can be found in Trump-friendly, manufacturing-heavy states in the Midwest and South. According to government

figures, nearly 1.5 million people were employed in the metal fabrication industry in February. In contrast, just 383,000 worked in metal manufacturing.

In imposing the tariffs, Trump said that steel imports "threaten to impair the national security of the United States" by weakening the domestic steel industry, which could make the Pentagon reliant on foreign-made steel. The administration also cited an economic rationale to justify the tariffs. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said the tariffs were

another example of Trump "standing up for American families, American businesses, and American workers."

There's little doubt that the tariffs will help steel companies and steelworkers. Steel-company stocks and steel prices are trending upward. U.S. Steel said this month that it might restart part of a plant in Granite City, Ill., which could lead to jobs for 500 workers. Nucor announced a new mill in Florida that will employ 250 people.

Yet those gains come at a cost. A study by the Trade Partnership, a Washington economic consulting company, found that while the tariffs would increase employment in the metals industry by about 33,000 jobs, they would cost about 179,000 jobs

TOM WILLIAMS / ROLL CALL / GETTY

in the rest of the economy. The biggest loser in the manufacturing sector would be fabricated metals.

Administration officials have been mostly dismissive of concerns about the negative effects of the tariffs. On CNBC, Ross held up cans of beer and Campbell's soup as props and explained that the cost of metal in each can would go up only a fraction of a cent. He concluded that "all this hysteria is a lot to do about nothing." Asked about the effect on metal-using industries, White House trade adviser Peter Navarro told Fox News, "Look, they don't like this. Of course they don't like this. But what do they do? They spin, the fake news. They put all this hyperbole out." Steelworkers have been even more blunt. Asked what he would say to other manufacturers worried about layoffs and plant closings, Dan Simmons, head of the United Steelworkers local in Granite City, told NPR: "You know what I say to them? They had no problem taking jobs away from us under that same pretense. So to hell with them."

Metal-fabrication companies like SteelFab, though, insist that their worries are real. Business for their industry has been strong because the economy is doing well, including the manufacturing and construction sectors that they principally serve. Prices from their suppliers fluctuate all the time, but the difference with the tariffs is that prices promise to rise more sharply and more quickly than usual.

At CaptiveAire Systems of Raleigh, N.C., president Bob Luddy says his company might be more immune to the tariffs initially than smaller companies, because it has many of its steel prices locked in for the next 6 to 12 months. CaptiveAire makes kitchen-ventilation equipment for restaurants using steel from both U.S. and

European producers. It has six U.S. plants and 1,200 employees.

In the short term, CaptiveAire will be able to avoid passing higher costs along to its customers, though the tariffs will cut into the company's profits. If tariffs remain in place for a year or more, Luddy will probably have to raise prices, which could discourage companies from opening restaurants. "It's a tax on the company is what it is, in simple terms," he says. "Somehow, that seems to get overlooked."

Steeling for Layoffs

New tariffs on foreign steel and aluminum are expected to help the U.S. metals industry, but they also are expected to hurt other industries by making metals more expensive. Here are the biggest predicted winners and losers:

(Industry expected gain or loss of jobs)

Iron and steel +29,998

Nonferrous metals +3,466

Motor vehicles and parts -5,052

Financial services -5,105

Other machinery -5,247

Personal and recreational services -10,312

Fabricated metals -12,802

Business and professional services -22,375

Construction -28,313

Trade and distribution -34,065

SOURCE: "Policy Brief: Does Import Protection Save Jobs?"
The Trade Partnership, March 2018

One of the industry's leading trade groups, the Fabricators & Manufacturers Association, met in Scottsdale, Ariz., earlier this month, and tariffs dominated the discussions, says Ed Youdell, the association's president. The big concern is that if metal parts suddenly cost more to produce in the United States, the manufacturing and construction industries might turn to foreign suppliers. During a panel discussion at the conference, a buyer for Briggs & Stratton, an engine-maker based in Wauwatosa, Wisc., was asked if rising prices for parts would prompt him to turn to foreign suppliers. His response: "I will do my job." Tariffs designed to help American industry could actually help foreign steelmakers and damage U.S. metal fabricators.

This month, the industry trade journal the *Fabricator* invited readers to sound off anonymously on the tariffs, and the results were overwhelmingly negative: "It has the potential to destroy American business and mine entirely. . . . I see manufacturing going down and machine sales with it," wrote "PM," a small machine manufacturer in Nevada. "Steel going from 43 cents per pound this quarter to 65 cents next quarter? . . . How is this going to help our economy? This

could cause a snowball effect with our economy going off a cliff," wrote "RS," who runs a 100-employee fabrication shop.

Youdell says metal fabricators are waiting to see how the tariffs shake out, and if there's more coming from Washington: "Are they going to extend those tariffs down the supply chain? That's our hope. Actually, we'd prefer not to have tariffs. We'd prefer open and free markets. But this is the world we live in."

At SteelFab, Sherrill is preparing to weather the expected increases as best he can. Like

other steel users, he doesn't know precisely how quickly or how sharply his costs will rise.

A week after the tariffs were announced, Sherrill wrote a letter to his customers. He told them his steel costs have risen between 25 percent and 45 percent in recent months and that more increases are probably on the way. His letter concluded: "We have no way of knowing the additional impact the tariffs will ultimately have on prices and lead times but hope that a lot of the escalation is already baked into the current price. . . . We appreciate your business and will do our best to mitigate the impact of the tariffs by continuing to communicate to you as soon as we have information from our steel suppliers." ♦

The Protectionist's Protectionist

Peter Navarro overcomes the globalists.

BY MICHAEL WARREN

This is Peter Navarro's moment. The gadfly economist, whose *idée fixe* is America's capitulation to China on trade, joined the Trump administration on Day One, heading up the National Trade Council, a new office created by the new president. But for the first 13 months, Trump did little to advance his promised protectionist agenda, and Navarro had to keep quiet as free traders like Treasury secretary Steven Mnuchin and Gary Cohn, the chairman of the National Economic Council (NEC), held the reins.

But Trump's announcement of new steel and aluminum tariffs on March 1, and Cohn's subsequent resignation, suggest that protectionism's time has come. Navarro, 68, began popping up on cable news, and he made his Sunday political show debut on March 4—appearing on three of them. Fox News host Chris Wallace asked Navarro about the significant opposition from the president's own party to the new tariffs. “Donald Trump ran against 16 Republicans. None of those Republicans supported Donald Trump's positions on trade. He beat every one of them,” Navarro said, grinning. “And then Donald Trump went on to the Democratic opponent who didn't support his positions on trade and he beat them, too.”

The Navarro view on American trade policy—that the U.S. government has been abetting Chinese cheating and gutting the domestic manufacturing

sector—is reflective of the president's own instincts. But unlike his boss's, Navarro's background is in academia, not business. He got a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard in 1986 and taught at the University of California, Irvine, for two decades. His research interests involved electricity and environmental policies. One of his first

books, published in 1985, had the scintillating title *The Dimming of America: The Real Costs of Electric Utility Regulatory Failure*. From the beginning, he earned a reputation for making pointed, dogmatic arguments—with perhaps a bit of sleight of hand. “One aspect of *The Dimming of America* that

will be disquieting to those knowledgeable about the electric utility industry is Mr. Navarro's selection of statistics to support his underlying thesis,” reads a contemporary review. “Quite simply, they are suspect.”

Navarro ran repeatedly and unsuccessfully for public office in the 1990s as a Democrat, including a 1996 bid for a House seat in San Diego. He also wrote books on investment and management advice before turning his attention to China. Navarro's 2006 book *The Coming China Wars* hit on the themes that would become staples of his commentary—the original sin of allowing China to join the World Trade Organization, the litany of illegal trade actions proliferated by Beijing, the environmental costs of the economic opening between China and the West.

By 2011, Navarro had abandoned the idea that economic war with China was imminent because, as he wrote in *Death by China*, the war was

already here and America was losing. Navarro described China's “weapons of job destruction,” including manipulation of the value of its currency, theft of intellectual property, and illegal export subsidies.

That book became a documentary, which Navarro directed and produced. It's available on YouTube, and watching it is uncannily like listening to one of Trump's campaign speeches advocating protective trade measures. It's also a window into the party-bending nature of trade politics.

Narrated by Hollywood-liberal-in-good-standing Martin Sheen, *Death by China* features friendly interviews with members of Congress from both parties, conservative commentators Peter Morici and Gordon Chang, AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka, and Obama administration economist Jared Bernstein. Against the film's crude animations depicting our trade regime as a shell game, the interviewees all confirm Navarro's position: that collusion between the federal government and corporate America to allow China to trade freely with the United States has gutted American manufacturing and destroyed the working class.

It's no wonder Trump invited Navarro onto his campaign and then into the White House. But for most of his tenure, he's remained on the sidelines with just a few allies, including the two Steves (Bannon and Miller) and Commerce secretary Wilbur Ross. Navarro's office was seen as particularly redundant by the rest of the West Wing, as trade issues traditionally are in the portfolio of the NEC.

Cohn, like most of Trump's policy aides, didn't share the president's affinity for protectionism. This resulted in shouting matches with Navarro. “During their showdowns, Mr. Cohn at times accused Mr. Navarro of lying to the president about the effect of his proposals and often laced his accusations with a colorful round of expletives, said White House officials who witnessed their debates,” the *Wall Street Journal* reported. Navarro hit back by questioning the motives of Cohn and other “Wall Street globalists” who, he said, opposed tariffs because of the



Peter Navarro

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ANDREW HARRER / BLOOMBERG / GETTY

effects on their own financial holdings.

Despite being outnumbered and outgunned in the White House, Navarro turned out to have the only ally who mattered: Trump himself. Cohn and the free traders may have won the battle for a time, but Navarro's presence served to confirm Trump's gut beliefs about the problems with our economy. To his opponents in the West Wing, Navarro brought out the worst in Trump.

Navarro believes himself to be the Trump-whisperer on matters of trade and tariffs—though he puts it differently in public. The tariff proposal “is the president's vision,” he said on Bloomberg TV on March 7. “My function, really, as an economist is to try to provide the underlying analytics that confirm his intuition. And his intuition is always right in these matters.”

But it may not be that simple. On March 14, the White House confirmed that Cohn's replacement was not another protectionist but Larry Kudlow, a TV journalist and free-market advocate. Kudlow, who like Navarro was an economic adviser to the Trump campaign, had just days earlier coauthored an op-ed with Stephen Moore, urging Trump to reconsider the steel tariffs. Kudlow is not entirely unsympathetic to Navarro's broad argument about bad Chinese practices—and even makes a brief appearance in *Death by China*—but he is no protectionist.

Moore, who also advised the Trump campaign, said Kudlow and Navarro are friendly and don't view each other as adversaries. When Kudlow appeared on CNBC hours after the news of his appointment broke, he offered an acknowledgment of his future White House colleague's new status. “In my mind, Peter Navarro is an equal,” said Kudlow.

For the time being, though, Navarro may be first among equals when it comes to crafting trade policy. According to *Politico*, when Trump was presented in a cabinet meeting in early March with a \$30 billion tariff package against Chinese imports, he told U.S. trade representative Robert Lighthizer to go bigger. Navarro couldn't have said it better himself. ♦

Skunk vs. Skunk

The defense of the Second Amendment goes down-market. BY DAVE SHIFLETT

If someone invented a television “raver filter” there would no doubt be national jubilation—until we realized that blocking the ravers would leave very little to watch. Everyone raves these days: sports announcers, politicians, airline executives, celebrities, cartoon characters, weather forecasters, dog trainers, and of course the growing army of what were once called “talking heads”—whose noggins have all gone nuclear in the Age of Trump.

Add to the raver list the current flock of flacks deployed by the National Rifle Association. While former NRA president Charlton Heston could be a bit dramatic (declaring that Second Amendment foes would have to pry his musket from his “cold dead hands”), you expected as much from the man who played Moses, survived a seriously contested Roman chariot race, and bravely championed his species on the *Planet of the Apes*. Besides that, he's weak tea compared with his successors.

A little disclosure may be in order. As a native Southerner I of course keep a few shooting irons around the house. Nothing capable of bringing down a jetliner, to be sure, but enough to seriously harass a low-flying Gulfstream (we could bring down a Cessna with our cutlery). I have no problems with AR-15s—or Kalashnikovs—or with requiring purchasers to jump through a few more hoops. I don't give money to the NRA, one reason being that every mass shooting seems to be followed by a fundraising call, the apparent formula being: “Lots of people just got shot so send us some money.” Nor do I believe the NRA is as powerful as its enemies—and, for that matter, its own PR material—assert. Politicians love money but they love

votes more; those who supposedly “line up” with the NRA are voting the way their constituents want them to vote.

All that said, defending the Second Amendment can be a noble calling, and as such it would seem reasonable for the NRA to present gun owners and advocates as calm, self-possessed, and thoughtful individuals. Among other things, that would distinguish them from many of their rabid critics. Yet it appears the new strategy is to out-rave the competition. Grant Stinchfield, for example, a man with a firm jaw and demeanor to match, stars in an advocacy video (at NRA TV) that begins with him watching a few anti-gun snippets on a television, then destroying the tube with a sledgehammer. Appliance smashing, to be sure, has some entertainment value, yet the idea that Stinchfield—and the NRA—might be every bit as rabid as the people who say guns should be melted down and repurposed as personhole covers easily comes to mind.

In similar spirit Colion Noir, an African American with good pistol skills and a sharp wit, starts his video pleasantly enough, but soon insists that “the mainstream media love mass shootings” and have “a vested interest in the perpetuation of mass tragedy.” This doesn't sound all that different, in tone and temperament, from claims that the NRA and its congressional allies don't care if schoolchildren are massacred so long as AR-15s are easily available and the NRA cash keeps flowing.

Neither of these gents is a match for Dana Loesch, a striking brunette who will appeal to friendly viewers as something of a Delphic oracle, while opponents may consider her an incarnation of Helga, She Wolf of the SS. At this year's CPAC conference Loesch, the NRA's premier spokesperson, paced the stage like a human

Dave Shiflett posts his writing and original music at www.Daveshiflett.com

flamethrower on black stiletto heels, proclaiming that the media “love mass shootings” and that “crying white mothers are ratings gold”—in contrast to the Chicago mothers of black homicide victims, who are largely ignored. The audience lapped it up, perhaps overlooking the fact that the simultaneous killing of a dozen or two people will always overshadow a death toll reached incrementally.

Loesch is bright, knowledgeable about her subject (she’s brimming with details about FBI and local law enforcement screwups that may have allowed mass killers the freedom to act), and seems much at home in the lion’s den. She appeared at a town hall after the recent Florida school massacre, where (according to her) some audience members insisted she be burned alive. But she often sounds as if she has a brazier full of hot poker just off-camera, in case anyone needs a little help fully accepting some of her message’s finer points. Consider a plug she did prior to starting a new talk show.

So to every lying member of the media, to every Hollywood phony, to the role model athletes who use their free speech to alter and undermine what our flag represents, to the politicians who would rather watch America burn than lose one ounce of their own personal power, to the late-night hosts who think their opinions are the only opinions that matter, to the Joy-Ann Reids, the Morning Joes, the Mikas, to those who stain honest reporting with partisanship, to those who bring bias and propaganda to CNN, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times*. Listen up! Your time is running out. The clock starts now.

One wonders if Joe and Mika, who seem easily spooked, have ordered Willie Geist to poison test the morning coffee. Maybe Willie will one day let us know. Meantime, even a casual observer is likely to wonder if Loesch has a side gig writing for the White House or vice versa. Not only does her anti-media message sound like it just flew from the president’s lips. She’s also Big Orange’s loyal wingman: “We are witnesses to the most ruthless attack on a president and the people who voted for him and the free system that

allowed it to happen in American history,” she says in one NRA spot. “We’ve had enough of the lies, the sanctimony, the arrogance, the hatred, the pettiness, the fake news. . . . We are done with your agenda to undermine voters’ will and individual liberty in America.”

We live in shrill times, and maybe it’s necessary to shriek a bit in order to



Dana Loesch

be heard. And for all we know Loesch is not so much defending the Second Amendment as laying the foundation for a run at higher office. A victory would not be surprising. Plenty of voters would no doubt rather watch her strut her stuff than watch Nancy Pelosi chew her cud.

At the same time, Loesch and her colleagues are neutralizing the argument that their opponents are uniquely sanctimonious, shrill, crazed, and fearful. What a fat target to surrender: They not only fear guns (according to the standard indictment) but also the sun, salt, alcohol, diet soda, and a million other things. These are the fiends who came up with words

like “bombogenesis” to spook old people who are just trying to watch the weather. Why cast all this aside? While there may be genius at work here, on the surface this looks like bad asset management.

While most Americans, it’s safe to say, head to the can when gun debaters appear on their TV screens, the conflict does illuminate a phenomenon worth keeping an eye on: the belief that the Constitution was written for a population far different from ours and needs “fixing.” Gun control advocates insist the Founders never envisioned modern weaponry when the Second Amendment was written. Opponents respond that the Founders never envisioned 12-year-olds downloading pornography on their cell phones or a hyperviolent entertainment culture that allegedly inspires nihilism and a desire to commit mass murder. Ergo, if the Second Amendment goes in for a trim, so should the First.

Invoking the Founders, of course, is a shaky proposition. If that honored assembly suddenly reappeared and took power, many of us would likely wind up in prison or dangling from the end of a rope. The only thing left on television would be the fishing shows. Perhaps a different consensus should be encouraged: The best (and safest) way to honor the Founders is to let anyone attempting to rewrite their Constitution have it with both barrels.

What does the future hold? We’ve all got our private crystal balls. Mine indicates the “assault weapon” debate will become moot after the crazies learn to make bombs that will overshadow the 1927 school bombing in Bath Township, Mich, that killed 44 people. Once hundreds of people are killed in single attacks, shooting a few dozen will be no big shakes and may even brand the perpetrator a loser. Not a happy viewpoint to be sure, yet history teaches that you can’t be too grim in this world.

Yet we can also dream—perhaps envisioning a time when the NRA leavens its bile by publicizing the stories of a far chiller breed of gun rights advocate. I nominate Keith Richards, who used to carry a pistol to pacify belligerent drug dealers. A truly

GARY LOCKE

responsible and inspiring use of firearms! Fellow Rolling Stone member Ronnie Wood would make another nice cameo. Wood reports that after Richards threatened him with a deringer he responded by drawing his own weapon—a .44 Magnum, no less.

Imagine the possibilities:

Dana Loesch: Well, Keef, tell us why you think protecting the Second Amendment is important.

KR: I'll do better than that, love. Pour us a few drinks and I'll show you me pistol.

Just make sure nobody mentions Phil Spector. ♦

the *News of the World* a spanking and awarded Mosley 60,000 pounds in damages. Since beating the *News of the World* in court, Mosley has used his considerable personal fortune to campaign for limiting the freedom of the press, and not just in Britain.

The exuberance of the British tabloids is notorious, and their readers' appetite for smut is insatiable. In the 1990s and 2000s, the tabloids behaved so shamefully that they endangered the freedom of the press. *News of the World* staff were alleged to have hacked the voicemails of 9/11 victims and to have commissioned the hacking of the voicemails of a murdered teenager named Milly Dowler. They certainly hacked the messages of the royal family; in 2007, a *News of the World* journalist was jailed for doing exactly that.

In 2011, the David Cameron government launched a public inquiry under Lord Justice Brian Leveson into press ethics. Max Mosley was among those who testified. When the Leveson inquiry reported in 2012, its recommendations included replacing the self-regulating Press Complaints Commission with a government-funded Press Recognition Panel (PRP). Rupert Murdoch, the owner of the *News of the World*'s parent company, closed the paper.

The newspapers did their best not to comply with Leveson, and the Cameron government rapidly lost its interest in forcing their compliance. Press regulation in Britain remains in limbo and the press on probation; Leveson's recommendation that newspapers be liable for both sides' costs if a complaint goes to court, regardless of who wins, has yet to become law. The PRP does not recognize the industry's replacement for the Press Complaints Commission, the Independent Press Standards Organization (IPSO), and the major newspapers have chosen to regulate themselves individually rather than submit to IPSO.

The government's PRP has meanwhile recognized a second regulator, IMPRESS, even though no major newspaper is a member. IMPRESS, which now carries a quasi-governmental power to criticize the press,

Anti-Press Gang

Max Mosley and Jeremy Corbyn's war on the media. BY DOMINIC GREEN

London
It is a matter of public record that in 2007 Max Mosley, the son of the British fascist Oswald Mosley and his posh, Hitler-loving wife Diana, did not enjoy what the *News of the World* called a "sick Nazi orgy with five hookers." As the ruling in *Mosley v. News Group Newspapers Ltd.* (2008) confirms, Mr. Mosley merely rented an apartment for the day and hired five prostitutes for the purposes of an orgy sick even by the standards of Tony Blair's Britain. Mr. Mosley certainly enjoyed himself; the video that the *News of the World* ran on its website showed that much, and much more. It was only the Nazi part that was untrue.

At the time, Max Mosley was the president of the *Fédération Internationale du Sport Automobile* (FISA), which runs Formula One motor racing. In its effort to justify its intrusion as being in the public interest, the *News of the World* exaggerated somewhat. The women, pretending to be prison guards, had inspected Mosley's hair for lice, but they had not shaved his head. They had only shaved his buttocks, preparatory to caning them.

Shortcomings were also exposed in the costume department. The prison-style uniforms had horizontal stripes, not the vertical ones of German concentration camp inmates. One of the

dominatrices had been wearing not a "Nazi uniform," as the *News of the World* had claimed, but a uniform of the postwar Luftwaffe; same color, no swastikas. The same woman had been caught on tape calling another participant "schwarze" while she whipped her.



But, Mosley's lawyer explained, she had used it in its non-racist colloquial sense of "brunette." He also insisted that his client, who wears hearing aids, had not heard the Luftwaffe dominatrix shout, "Aryans rule!" Anyone who frequents S&M dungeons with a problematic hearing aid can probably sympathize.

In the learned opinion of Justice David Eady, it was Mosley's right as a free-born Englishman to pay women to flog him until his buttocks bled and then to keep it secret. Eady gave

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is funded by former victims of press intrusion, including *Harry Potter* author J. K. Rowling. Its biggest donor is the fun-loving ex-*Führer* of Formula One himself, Max Mosley.

At the time of IMPRESS's receipt of a royal charter in 2016, Mosley had donated more than \$5 million to the regulator, via two charitable trusts. These donations are only part of Mosley's campaign for what he calls privacy.

In 2011, Mosley tried to persuade the European Court of Human Rights that newspapers should be forced to warn people before exposing their private lives, regardless of whether the public interest is at stake. In what the *Telegraph* called "a significant victory for free speech," the court ruled against Mosley.

In 2013 and 2014, Mosley won cases in French and German courts against Google. Aligning his campaign to cover his shameful past with growing public concern over online privacy, he secured verdicts that banned Google from giving French and German Internet users links to images from the *News of the World's* 2008 exposé. In 2015, following the launch of a case against Google in a British court, Mosley and Google reached a secret, out-of-court agreement.

In 2016, the year in which his generosity to IMPRESS helped to secure quasi-governmental approval from the Press Recognition Panel, Mosley donated a further 500,000 pounds to Tom Watson, a member of Parliament and deputy leader of the Labour party. This was one of the largest donations to a single politician in British history. Mosley has donated to the Labour party since the 1990s. Perhaps Mosley was feeling especially socialist in 2016, though not, of course, even slightly national-socialist. It is hard for us to know what Mosley really feels. And by ceaselessly campaigning to restrict the freedom of the press, Mosley would like to make it even harder for us to know.

Last month the *Daily Mail* published evidence suggesting that Mosley perjured himself in his testimony against the *News of the World*. In court, Mosley had admitted having served

as campaign manager for a candidate of his father's racist Union Movement in a 1961 by-election in Manchester. He had testified, however, that it was "absolute nonsense" to suggest he had published leaflets claiming that non-white immigrants carried disease and that voters should "send blacks home."

The racist leaflet reprinted by the *Mail* carried the words "published by Max Mosley." Mosley threatened legal action and insisted that he had disavowed his father's fascism in 1963. The *Mail* replied by publishing a photograph of Mosley at his father's last major public speech in 1965 and reminded readers of Formula One's collaboration with the apartheid government of South Africa.

The Labour party, under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, is proving itself a tolerant group when it comes to the ideological crotchets of its backers. Tom Watson has refused to refund any of Mosley's generous donation. Watson has further praised Mosley as a defender of "the weak against the strong." Walter Merricks, the chairman of IMPRESS, has stood by his patron too. But senior Labour sources have said that the party will accept no further donations from Mosley, whose most recent donation was in 2017. Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Police are assessing the *Mail's* claims on behalf of the Crown Prosecution Service, and News International, the parent company of the defunct *News of the World*, has instructed its lawyers "to consider . . . all our options."

Mosley's discomfort displaced from the front pages allegations about the shameful past of Jeremy Corbyn himself. Jan Sarkocy, who was a "diplomat" in Czechoslovakia's London embassy in the 1980s until his expulsion as a spy, has claimed that Corbyn and other hard-left Labour politicians socialized regularly with staff members of Warsaw Pact embassies in London in those days. Sarkocy also claims that he recruited Corbyn as an "asset," and he paid him 10,000 pounds.

Corbyn derided these claims as "ridiculous smears." He threatened that a Corbyn government would

impose the sort of press restraints that Max Mosley would appreciate: "We've got news for them, change is coming."

Given what happened next, you can understand why Corbyn might appreciate the kind of scrubbing of the Internet that Mosley secured from Google. Last week, it emerged that in the year before he became Labour leader in 2015, Corbyn had been an active member of a private Facebook group called Palestine Live. Topics of discussion included Holocaust denial, purported Zionist control of the BBC, Israel's supposed involvement in the 9/11 and 2015 Paris attacks, and conspiracy theories about the Rothschilds. Several Labour party members were active participants in the group, and Corbyn's son was a non-contributing member.

So Max Mosley, who is Tom Watson's biggest donor, wants to see press freedom reduced and the Internet subject to retroactive censorship. And Jeremy Corbyn, who is Tom Watson's party leader, promises to reduce the freedom of the press should he enter 10 Downing Street. If he does, IMPRESS will be on hand to advise on what should and should not be published.

If the British press were already regulated as Mosley and Corbyn want, Mosley would have been able to stop the *Mail* from publishing evidence that he had at the very least misspoken under oath in 2008. The Palestine Live group would have been able to continue its secret propagation of racist conspiracy theories in the Labour party. And Corbyn would have been able to prevent the airing of highly plausible allegations of Cold War fellow-traveling. All this in the name of privacy. Yet in all three cases, publication served a clear public interest.

The company that the leaders of Britain's opposition party keep and the shared hostility towards a free press that unites Mosley the secretive millionaire with Corbyn the Trotskyite authoritarian may explain Mosley's reply when Sky TV's Adam Boulton asked him about his politics.

"Are you still a fascist?"

"No, I'm a member of the Labour party." ♦

Like Sheep Among Wolves

Russell Moore and the evangelical mission in the age of Trump

BY MARK HEMINGWAY

Nashville

From a corner office on the fifth floor of the Southern Baptist Convention's headquarters in downtown Nashville, Russell Moore, president of the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), can look out of his large windows and watch the city's skyline being remade every day. Like Austin, Texas, and Portland, Ore., before it, Nashville is in the midst of a renaissance. Daniel Patterson, Moore's chief of staff, says it's actually become difficult for the SBC to host events in town, because there aren't enough hotel rooms to keep up with demand.

Nashville's growth reflects the city's burgeoning cultural and political significance. Music City has outgrown its strictly country roots to become a dominant force in the music industry. But the city also exerts considerable national influence as a result of SBC's presence. The Southern Baptist Convention is the largest Protestant denomination in America as well as a lodestar for a much larger group of believers broadly defined as evangelical Christians. The SBC is arguably the most influential religious institution in America, aside from the Catholic church; Nashville is not quite Rome, but the city's relationship to evangelicalism has prompted conflict with non-evangelicals.

Last year a number of prominent evangelical leaders, including Moore, Moore's predecessor Richard Land, current SBC president Stephen Gaines, and theologian Albert Mohler, signed a letter known as the "Nashville Statement." The statement reaffirmed their commitment to biblical sexual ethics, including implicit and explicit condemnations of premarital sex, pornography, gay marriage, transsexualism, and a bevy of other hot-button social issues. This prompted Nashville's liberal Democratic mayor, Megan Barry, to publicly denounce the signatories, saying that the "so-called 'Nashville statement' is poorly named and does not represent the inclusive values of the city and people of Nashville."

The civic skirmish might have ended there, but the

night before I arrived to meet Moore, Mayor Barry held an awkward press conference to announce that she had been having an affair with the police sergeant in charge of her security detail. Worse, Barry had taken several trips alone with her lover on the taxpayer's dime. That morning in the SBC's offices, Moore's capable lieutenants, many of whom are seminary graduates or pastors themselves, were openly wrestling with the sinful impulse to indulge in *schadenfreude*. Just a few months before, Barry had disparaged their faithful profession that "God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife." And now here she was, being brought low because she did not heed their admonition. As well, Barry had the audacity to declare that God would forgive her for her trespasses. "God will forgive me," Barry said, "but the people of Nashville don't have to. In the weeks and months to come, I will work hard to earn your forgiveness and earn back your trust." Unfortunately for Barry, local prosecutors weren't about to bestow grace. She resigned a little over a month later after pleading guilty to felony theft related to her misuse of state resources.

Barry's scandal shouldn't overshadow the fact that the Nashville Statement is, in some respects, a model for civic engagement by churches and an effective platform for a group of influential Christian leaders to publicly reaffirm their commitment to biblical values, untethered to any sort of legislative agenda. If you've been paying attention to national politics for the last few years, the idea that evangelical leaders are themselves in a position to offer such moral leadership might be in question. Even religious cynics have been shocked by the way so many evangelicals have lined up to prostrate themselves in the service of electing as president of the United States an exceptionally profane, likely unfaithful, thrice-married braggart who once publicly supported abortion and refers to holy communion as having "my little cracker."

The notable exception among evangelical leaders is Russell Moore: As long ago as September 2015, when the prospect of a President Trump was still considered highly unlikely, Moore published an op-ed in the *New York Times*

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asking, “Have Evangelicals Who Support Trump Lost Their Values?” His answer was unequivocally yes, and Moore charged Trump with using evangelicals to further his ambitions. “We should not demand to see the long-form certificate for Mr. Trump’s second birth,” he wrote. “We should, though, ask about his personal character and fitness for office. His personal morality is clear, not because of tabloid exposés but because of his own boasts. His attitude toward women is that of a Bronze Age warlord.” Trump returned fire in May 2016, tweeting: “Russell Moore is truly a terrible representative of Evangelicals and all of the good they stand for. A nasty guy with no heart!”

But Moore saved his most excoriating criticism for his fellow evangelicals, referring to them during the Republican primaries as being from the “Jimmy Swaggart wing” of the church. When Moore’s name wasn’t on a list of evangelicals meeting with Trump in May 2016, he tweeted that he couldn’t attend because of a “dietary restriction: I’m allergic to Kool-Aid.” It became increasingly obvious that Moore’s motivation was not merely to point out Trump’s moral failings, which are self-evident. It was to splash cold water on the faces of his religious peers, who ought to know better than to put their trust in princes.

Moore’s prescient 2015 book, *Onward: Engaging the Culture Without Losing the Gospel*, had perceptively summed up the Faustian bargain many of his fellow evangelicals would soon strike. “The church of Jesus Christ ought to be the last people to fall for hucksters and demagogues. After all, the church bears the Spirit of God, who gifts the Body with discernment and wisdom,” he writes. “But too often we do. We receive celebrities simply because they are ‘conservative,’ without asking what they are conserving. If you are angry with the same people we are, you must be one of us. But it would be a tragedy to get the right president, the right Congress, and the wrong Christ.”

To be sure, the temptation to be drawn into political battles is understandable. Lest anyone forget, the last presidential administration sued nuns over birth control, and “religious liberty” has acquired such a narrow definition in some civic arenas that the Christian owner of a literal printing press is in court right now trying to defend his right not to print gay pride T-shirts. But Moore sees his job as warning evangelical leaders not to lose sight of where the call to salvation ends and politics begins. He is credible in such efforts precisely because he doesn’t see his job as maximizing political influence, but rather as pursuing the prophetic tradition of helping believers see the way forward for themselves.

“We [at the ERLC] have two assignments from the SBC. One is to equip churches and Christians to think

through moral issues across the spectrum. The other is to speak to the outside world, in government, media, and culture. I’m always trying to have both of those conversations at the same time,” he tells *THE WEEKLY STANDARD*. “If I’m talking about a moral issue, gambling for instance, I want to also be talking to people in churches about why gambling isn’t just a personal issue—it has social implications as well. When I’m speaking in terms of public policy dealing with abortion, I’m wanting to teach people why we care about abortion, and to constantly have the gospel explicitly woven into that appeal.”

The frustration for Moore is that many Christians can’t or won’t think through the moral issues for themselves, apart from political appeals. “The biggest problem is not that we lost the culture war; it’s that we never really had one. . . . The heated and outraged rhetoric of evangelicals

in the political and media spheres is often directly related to the ineffectuality of Christian distinctiveness in our living rooms and pews,” he writes in *Onward*. “If the Bible Belt had held to a truly ‘radical’ sort of religious vitality, we ought to see regions with higher church attendance strikingly out-of-step with the rest of the country when it comes to marital harmony, divorce rates, sexual mores, domestic violence, and so on. We’re not the culture warriors we think we are, unless we’re fighting for the other side.”

As for what Moore thinks of the state of American evangelicalism, he couldn’t have been clearer in *Onward*: “The Bible Belt is teetering toward collapse, and I say let it fall.”

In order to understand why Moore has different answers to key political questions from many of his evangelical peers, it helps to understand what an “evangelical” really is—a question that has bedeviled American Christians since Robert Baird used the term as a catch-all for Protestants in his seminal 1844 book, *Religion in America*. In a literal sense, all Christians are called to be evangelists—those who proclaim and spread the good news of salvation. But the term is rarely used in this generic way. And in contemporary parlance, the religious connotations of the term are almost incidental to its political ones. “When I’m dealing with a very secular journalist, that’s usually the assumption that I most quickly have to address, because they seem to assume that evangelicals are like cicas that go into dormancy between Iowa caucuses and that evangelicalism is just all about who’s up and who’s down and what the legislative agenda ought to be,” says Moore.

The theological specifics of American evangelicalism

Moore saved his most excoriating criticism for his fellow evangelicals, referring to them as being from the ‘Jimmy Swaggart wing’ of the church.

are a lot harder to pin down. H.K. Carroll, author of the first volume of the 1893 study *Religious Forces of the United States*, observed, “The evangelical Christianity of to-day is not polemic. It is intensely practical. It emphasizes more than it used to the importance of Christian character and of Christian work. It is less theological in its preaching, making more, indeed, of biblical exposition, but less of doctrinal forms and definitions. . . . It is the gospel it declares and is trying to work out in a practical way.”

The emphasis on practicality made evangelicalism appealing, if difficult to define when it came to specific beliefs. “The religious historian George Marsden once quipped that in the 1950s and 1960s an evangelical Christian was ‘anyone who likes Billy Graham,’” writer Jonathan Merritt, the son of a former SBC president, noted in an *Atlantic* essay. But in 1987, journalism professor and religion reporter Terry Mattingly had the bright idea of asking Graham himself what the term meant, and it turns out that the country’s most famous evangelical and Southern Baptist couldn’t define it either. “Actually, that’s a question I’d like to ask somebody, too. . . . You go all the way from the extreme fundamentalists to the extreme liberals and, somewhere in between, there are the evangelicals,” Graham said.

Graham was perceptive in observing that evangelicalism was increasingly defined by what it was not. “Evangelical” is a useful term for the millions of American Christians who exist outside of the historical mainline Protestant churches, but it fails to acknowledge the transformation of those churches. Political conservatives bemoan the post-1960s liberal institutional takeover of academia and the media, but they often fail to reckon with a similar liberal march through the mainline denominations. Among the major Protestant denominations, only two confronted and quashed their liberal insurgencies, surviving with their church bodies largely intact and in control of their seminaries. The two denominations are the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (which, owing to a historically German-American identity and a stubborn streak of confessional orthodoxy, doesn’t neatly fit into the American evangelical tradition) and the much larger Southern Baptist Convention. If the nearly 16-million-member SBC (and millions of other evangelicals) are often accused of fighting culture wars, it’s worth remembering that they were not the aggressors.

Moore sees the fight within the churches as far more important than the culture wars outside them. “Frankly,

we should be more concerned about the loss of a Christian majority in the Protestant churches than about the loss of a Protestant majority in the United States,” he writes in *Questions and Ethics: Applying the Gospel to Tough Situations* (2014). “Most of the old-line Protestant denominations are held captive to every theological fad that has blown through their divinity schools in the past thirty years—from crypto-Marxist liberation ideologies, to sexual identity politics, to a neo-pagan vision of God—complete with gender neutralized liturgies.”

This isn’t hyperbole. In 2013, the Episcopal church’s then-presiding bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori was widely criticized for delivering a sermon in which she turned a passage from the book of Acts about the apostle Paul exorcising a demon from a slave girl into a story of how Paul oppressed the girl by “depriving her of her gift of spiritual awareness. Paul can’t abide something he won’t see as beautiful or holy, so he tries to destroy it.” While such an interpretation makes for a trendy parable about, say, gender equality, as biblical exegesis it is creative to the point of indefensibility and a good illustration of how the once-quintessential WASP denomination became a laughingstock among serious believers. Liberal theologies haven’t helped mainline Protestant church membership either, which has cratered since such views took hold. A *Washington Post* report last year noted, “the trend lines are showing a trajectory toward zero in both those who attend a mainline church regularly and those who identify with a mainline denomination 23 years from now.”

And yet non-evangelicals still frequently compare evangelicals to their liberal mainline peers and find them wanting—not for their theological views, but for the fact that they have not embraced progressive politics. “Journalists and sociologists tend to see evangelical Christianity in terms of ‘advance’ or ‘retreat.’ For them, if Christianity doesn’t operate in precisely the same patterns of partisan voter-bloc organizing, then such constitutes a ‘pullback’ from politics,” Moore writes in *Onward*. “And if Christians emphasize the public nature of the gospel message, the call to work for justice and righteousness, this represents a threat to American ideals of separation of church and state.”

Still, Moore doesn’t feel put upon or resentful about the thankless task of being one of evangelical America’s most prominent spokesmen on political issues. When it comes to dealing with the secular world, he’s fearless and upbeat. “I have almost never had a bad experience with media. Even



when they completely disagree with me, I'm usually treated fairly. That's probably the least stressful part of my job."

Other aspects of the job are more challenging. "The church is far more complex than dealing with media is," he says. Moore wants to make sure that the SBC and other evangelicals don't come to define themselves as simply a subculture that is "angry with the same people."

"In most evangelical Christians' lives they're concerned about many much more important things," Moore says. "That's very difficult to explain to someone who is constantly thinking about politics and only politics."

Nevertheless, politics makes itself felt in Moore's work. Moore got his start in politics working for Mississippi congressman Gene Taylor, a Democrat. Taylor was not especially liberal, and it's easy to forget that it was not that long ago that social conservatives from the South felt most at home in the Democratic party. As Moore notes, times have radically changed. In a little more than 20 years, the Mississippi Democratic party went from being on the record as pro-life to hosting fundraisers with the nation's most prominent socialist. "Bernie Sanders!" Moore says. "That would have been absolutely inconceivable."

But Moore's past is also a reminder that there's a lot more political diversity around the margins of evangelicalism than many observers acknowledge. The Bible has a lot to say about foundational issues such as marriage and sexual morality, and comparatively little to say about the appropriate level of redistribution in welfare policies. As head of the ERLC, Moore has staked out more liberal positions on issues than some in the SBC would like. He has testified before the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on the need to combat global warming alongside the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church in America, the head of the Evangelical Environmental Network, and other leaders of more liberal groups.

In March 2017, Moore nearly lost his job as head of the ERLC when 100 churches (out of more than 46,000) threatened to stop sending money to the SBC's umbrella fund because of their unhappiness with Moore's outspokenness. This came on the heels of a torrent of criticism from Southern Baptist pastors and church leaders displeased with his rhetoric. "How condescending can you be and not expect some kickback from the people who provide the monies for you to occupy the office you are misusing?" wrote William F. Harrell, a Georgia pastor who spent 16 years on the SBC's executive committee, on the website *SBC Today*.

Frank Page, president of the SBC's executive committee, called for a meeting with Moore and bluntly told the press, "If the meeting doesn't go well, I'm fully prepared to ask him for a change in his status." But shortly after the meeting, Page and Moore issued a statement of mutual support.

Moore survived the threat to his job for two reasons. First, he has done impressive work on racial reconciliation within a denomination that has a history of institutional racism. "The fallout [from forcing Moore out] will be the denomination signaling to African American and other ethnic groups that they're tone deaf and disinterested in that membership," Thabiti Anyabwile, a pastor of Anacostia River Church, a Southern Baptist congregation, told the *Washington Post*. In recent decades, the SBC has made sincere strides in racial integration—the SBC elected its first black president, Louisiana pastor Fred Luter, in 2012—and ejecting Moore, who has been a leader on racial issues in the SBC, including expressing vehement opposition to displays of the Confederate flag, would have been a PR nightmare for the church.

Second, setting aside Moore's political rhetoric, there's little doubt that he not only shares the theological priorities of the SBC but also articulates them as well as or better than anyone else, even in a denomination known for producing charismatic preachers. A few hours before our interview, Moore breezed through a remote TV interview with a foreign journalist on the treatment of women in U.S. prisons. He challenged religious conservatives to consider whether chaining female convicts to their beds as they give birth and denying them access to their children was compatible with a pro-life philosophy. Then, without skipping a beat, he strolled across the foyer to the podcast studio, where he plopped down a legal pad with a few handwritten notes and delivered a beautifully formed, mostly extemporaneous sermon that would soon be available for download.

It helps that the 46-year-old Moore, a former professor of Christian theology and ethics at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, is seen by many as one of the leading lights of the generation tutored by the venerated Albert Mohler. Mohler took over the seminary in 1993 and drove out the remaining liberal elements at the school. His subsequent insistence on teaching orthodoxy and fealty to the broader teachings of the SBC is seen as pivotal for the ongoing success of the Southern Baptists' conservative resurgence. (Notably, Mohler was also a Trump skeptic during the 2016 election.)

But Trump skepticism exacts a cost. Moore is supposed to be the Southern Baptists' emissary to Washington, and the Trump administration, notorious for blackballing those it deemed insufficiently supportive during the campaign, has not issued the same invitations to Moore that it has to other Southern Baptist leaders, such as Jack Graham, Ronnie Floyd, Robert Jeffress, and Richard Land.

Of course, a year into Trump's presidency, the ongoing revelations about the president's personal life have created challenges for the Christian leaders who do support the president. The Family Research Council's Tony

Perkins recently made headlines for his response to the all-but-proven allegations that Trump had an affair with a porn actress, telling *Politico*, “We kind of gave him—‘All right, you get a mulligan. You get a do-over here.’” But the broader context of Perkins’s remarks was telling. Gone are the days of comparing Trump to flawed biblical leaders such as Cyrus and King David. There seems to be a more candid and worldly conception of what he can do for his Christian backers.

“He’s a very transactional president. Trust is important to him. Loyalty is important to him, and I think in this transaction, he realizes, ‘Hey, these are people I can count on, because they don’t blow with the political winds,’” Perkins told *Politico*. “It’s a developing relationship, but I’ll have to say this: From a policy standpoint, he has delivered more than any other president in my lifetime.”

Although he is quick to praise Russell Moore, best-selling evangelical author and radio host Eric Metaxas also views the 2016 election as a moment when church leaders had to choose sides. “We had to be grownups and make an unpleasant choice between someone who in many ways we might not have liked or preferred, but who was the only possible choice if you didn’t want Hillary Clinton to be president,” Metaxas tells *THE WEEKLY STANDARD*. “The

idea that we can continue to pretend that a Hillary Clinton presidency would have been less awful for the country or for the Republican party or for the conservative movement or for the evangelical movement than Donald Trump, I find odd in the extreme.”

Moore is not immune to such observations. In December 2016, he issued a statement acknowledging the “pastors and friends who told me when they read my comments they thought I was criticizing anyone who voted for Donald Trump. I told them then, and I would tell anyone now: if that’s what you heard me say, that was not at all my intention, and I apologize.” But as part of his apology, he also made it clear his criticisms were properly directed at “a handful of Christian political operatives excusing immorality and confusing the definition of the gospel.”

Even if you concede that voting for Trump was in the best interest of evangelicals, Moore’s larger warning still holds true: Politics won’t fix a church that in the long term needs to be rebuilt from within. “I agree with C.S. Lewis when he said in *Mere Christianity* that the devil never sends temptations one by one,” says Moore. “He always sends them two by two so that we can spend most of our time arguing about which of them is worse rather than seeing what the path is toward righteousness.” ♦

Banking Bill Can Fuel the Growth Engine

THOMAS J. DONOHUE

PRESIDENT AND CEO
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Last week, in a heartening display of bipartisan cooperation, the U.S. Senate passed a badly needed fix to banking regulations—the first major legislation of its kind since the economic recovery began. If the bill becomes law, it will bring long-overdue relief to the local banks and Main Street lenders that power small business growth, entrepreneurship, and job creation. The U.S. House of Representatives should quickly take up and pass this legislation.

Throughout most of our country’s history, small businesses have relied on community and regional banks for the capital they need to grow and create jobs. But after the financial crisis in 2008, policymakers adopted a one-size-fits-all approach to bank regulation that severely limited the ability of community and regional banks to serve small businesses. The results of

this move speak for themselves. Since 2008, the number of small business loans has declined by over 40%, even though the U.S. economy has grown almost 25% over the same period.

Fortunately, Congress may now be coming to the rescue with the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act passed by the Senate last week. This important measure would breathe new life into regional and local lenders and, by doing so, provide a major jolt to economic growth and business investment. Small business optimism has already soared over the past year owing in large part to the passage of tax reform. Congress and President Trump now have an opportunity to add even more momentum to the recovery.

In addition to being a positive economic development, the passage of this bill is a positive political and legislative development. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce congratulates the senators—Republican and Democrat alike—who recognized a

need, got together, and hashed out their differences. This is a prime example of how government is supposed to work, and we hope legislators will build on this progress by passing additional commonsense reforms.

Many of the provisions of this bill were first considered in the House, which should help get this needed relief to the president’s desk. We’ll be urging U.S. representatives in both parties to recognize the enormous good this bill can do for their local communities. Our message is simple: Capital is the fuel that keeps our economic engine running. When we reduce access to that fuel, it makes it harder to turn ideas into reality. But when we increase access, it powers the business expansion, startup creation, and job growth that lead to widespread prosperity. So let’s step up and fuel the growth engine.



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The Great Shows

*There's more and better television than ever before—
but will any of it last?* BY SONNY BUNCH

It's been a while since we talked; have you caught up yet? The second season of *Jessica Jones* was bonkers; did you manage to make it through *The Punisher* and *The Defenders*? What about the new season of *Black Mirror*—that one episode where they warned against the dangers of technology outpacing our humanity was amazing, right?—or the latest run of *Bojack Horseman*? Never thought a cartoon could send me into an existential tailspin like it manages to do. It was a shame that the *Stranger Things* crew got shut out at the Golden Globes; they're doing really innova-

tive work in the 1980s homage space. Oh, what do you think's going to happen on *House of Cards*? How are they going to do the next season without Kevin Spacey?

You don't subscribe to Netflix? That's okay; the last year of HBO has been marvelous. *Game of Thrones* is so far ahead of the books now I don't even care if George R.R. Martin ever gets around to finishing his next doorstep. And since we won't get the finale until 2019, you have plenty of time to catch up on other stuff: There's *The Deuce*, a great new show from David Simon on the rise of the porn industry in grimy 1970s New York; there's the final season of the critically acclaimed (but woefully underwatched) *The Leftovers*,

a drama about the aftermath of a rapture of some sort; there's a whole raft of fantastic comedies—*Veep*, *Silicon Valley*, *Vice Principals*. I don't know about you, but I haven't watched a network sitcom in years; only the prestige channels are making jokes that sophisticates such as you and I can laugh at.

Wow, you don't watch HBO either. Weird. That's okay, there's plenty of good stuff on basic cable. I know it's a bit gauche to admit, but *The Walking Dead* and its spinoff *Fear the Walking Dead* are pretty entertaining. The good folks at AMC also have more substantial fare, like *Breaking Bad*-prequel *Better Call Saul* for us highbrows. The fact that *The Americans* hasn't won *all* the Emmys for FX is practically a crime.

Sonny Bunch is executive editor of the Washington Free Beacon.

HANNAH YOEST / THE WEEKLY STANDARD

At least *Fargo* has gotten the attention it deserves, and folks seem to love the anthologies *American Horror Story* and *American Crime Story*, Ryan Murphy's mini-empire of campy crap. The new season of *South Park* over at Comedy Central really stuck it to Trump. And look, if you want to stick to the networks for some reason, the CW is cranking out a whole DC comic-book universe: You could spend months just catching up on *Supergirl* and *The Flash* and *Arrow* and *Legends of Tomorrow*.

No, none of these is to your liking? Well, Amazon Prime must have something for you. What about ...

If you sometimes feel overwhelmed by the amount of television out there—by the increasing number of shows being praised by your peers, by the cascade of critically acclaimed programming on the ever-enlarging expanse of channels and pay tiers and streaming services—you're not alone. At the Television Critics Association's winter meeting in January, John Landgraf, the CEO of FX, highlighted the ongoing explosion in scripted programming. According to a report on Landgraf's speech in *Variety*, 2017 saw 487 scripted series air on networks, cable, pay cable, and streaming services—up from 455 in 2016, which was up from 422 in 2015. Only 153 of the 2017 series aired on network TV—ABC, NBC, etc.—while 175 were on basic cable. Streaming services are the biggest driver in the latest TV boom; outlets like Netflix, Amazon, and Hulu accounted for another 117 series. HBO and the other premium cable channels made up the final 42.

"Overall, the total series output on television since 2002 has grown by 168 percent," *Variety* reported. By way of comparison, America's population is up about 13 percent in the same time. The number of hours in the day has remained static, at 24. Simply put: There's vastly more content (to use a vulgarity that reduces art to a consumable but feels proper when describing the aforementioned torrent) than ever before—and that's not including the ever-increasing number of feature films or video games that take hundreds

of hours to play or YouTube channels making millionaires out of 6-year-old kids. The fragmented nature of our viewing habits means a TV show on a pay cable station can get by with a few hundred thousand viewers if critics like it and it pulls in awards; the biggest "hits" in the world of scripted entertainment are watched by less than 5 percent of the population, if we are to trust the ratings. Of course, with a plethora of viewing options—live airing, DVR'd recording, streaming on TVs and laptops and iPhones—relying on something as prosaic as the Nielsen

Many of the most popular and critically acclaimed recent shows have featured complex and ambitious storytelling and sky-high production values. But it seems clear that TV's new golden age is now over—the hit-to-miss ratio is simply too low.

ratings to measure popularity is a mug's game. We need to scan Google searches and Twitter trends and Facebook topics to see what's *really* driving the conversation at any given time.

If you had told people 20 years ago that there would one day be too much TV worth watching, they would've either laughed or assumed you were some sort of dullard. But *The Sopranos* would debut in January 1999. HBO's hit series combined sex and violence with Shakespearean power struggles and relatable family drama, inaugurating the medium's age of the antihero, one in which upticks in sex and violence were accompanied by more complex and ambitious storytelling and sky-high production values. Many critics use that date to mark the beginning

of the recent golden age of television, and it's a sensible-enough starting point. But Landgraf's decision to use 2002 as the point of comparison may make more sense. After all, HBO had been churning out original programming for decades—stand-up specials and sports programs and nudity-filled reality shows like *Real Sex*; mediocre sitcoms like *Arli\$\$* and critically acclaimed ones like *The Larry Sanders Show*; lurid, pulpier fare like *Oz*—before David Chase's gangster opus premiered. *The Sopranos* may have been the apotheosis of the network's motto, "It's not TV, it's HBO," but it wasn't a revolution in and of itself.

It was FX's show *The Shield*, which debuted in 2002, that truly altered the landscape. As Alan Sepinwall has pointed out, in its early years FX was mostly a dumping ground for syndicated programming: "If you wanted to watch *M*A*S*H* at 3 in the afternoon, or revisit the early days of *NYPD Blue* and *The X-Files*, FX was the place to go." It wasn't until *The Shield* came along—testing the boundaries of basic cable's standards-and-practices units with near-nudity, heightened levels of violence, and raunchier-than-network language while capitalizing on the fact that, unlike HBO or Showtime, it was available for no extra charge—that the true explosion in TV occurred. After FX paved the way with *The Shield*, *Rescue Me*, and *Nip/Tuck*, AMC got into the game with *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad*. And just like that, we were off to the races. If you want to know why the History Channel is currently airing a risqué show about Viking warriors, *The Shield* is as good a place as any to start.

But where to stop? It seems clear that the new golden age is over—the hit-to-miss ratio is simply too low now—but when did it end? Arguably 2013 is a good place to draw the curtain; as FX and basic cable were to 2002, so are Netflix and streaming to 2013. Consider, for starters, the impact Netflix had on *Breaking Bad*, the last truly great series of the new golden age. For its first four seasons, Vince Gilligan's epic story of science-teacher-turned-meth-dealer Walter White was a reliably modest

draw for AMC, generally garnering between one and two million viewers; only once, in the fourth-season premiere, did it nab more than two million sets of eyeballs. The first half of the fifth season, by contrast, saw audiences increase by 50 percent, to between two and three million viewers; the first seven episodes of the second half of the fifth (and final) season nearly doubled *that* figure, and the series finale doubled that again, pulling in an audience of 10 million.



Why the nearly tenfold increase between season one and series finale? Netflix. *Breaking Bad* found its legs not in its initial years and not in syndication but via streaming during season breaks, when audiences could sit down and binge-watch the critically acclaimed show they'd heard so much about in a few days or weeks, depending on how much they had to catch up on. "I think Netflix kept us on the air," Gilligan said when the program won its first Emmy for best drama in 2013 (it would win a second in 2014). "I don't think our show would have even lasted beyond season two. ... It's a new era in television and we've been very fortunate to reap the benefits." A tiny cult hit grew into something (relatively) massive because it was available for instant viewing and became a must-

watch for those interested in staying on the cutting edge of culture.

"Relatively" because, it is worth noting, even the surprisingly high ratings from *Breaking Bad*'s final season are well below what would have been considered "hits" in years past. To pick more or less at random a popular network show from recent history, *Friends* generally drew between 20 and 30 million viewers for new episodes. *The Big Bang Theory* draws about half that these days. The most popular

program in scripted cable history, *The Walking Dead*, topped out at just over 17 million viewers but has cratered in recent seasons; most recent episodes of the show have garnered roughly a third that number of viewers. The point being, by historical standards these are all niche programs garnering modest audiences.

The year 2013 also saw the premiere of Netflix's *House of Cards* and with it a new model for distributing shows: Unlike network channels or broadcast TV, which doled out their premier programming a week at a time for three months or so, Netflix released the whole season at once. This allowed viewers to watch shows at their own pace. And their own pace tended to mean "as fast as possible"; no one watching wanted to have the

adventures of devious Democratic pol Frank Underwood spoiled for them, and lots of people wanted to talk about the show. "Bingeing"—a word previously succeeded by "purging" when it wasn't used to describe drug consumption—finally took on a positive connotation. Netflix, therefore best understood as a means to watch movies created by the studios, learned what FX and AMC before it had come to realize: To become indispensable to the content consumer, you had to be a content creator. For basic-cable executives that meant creating must-watch shows so customers wouldn't cut the cord, and cable companies like Comcast and Time Warner would be forced to keep paying affiliate fees to air the networks. For Netflix, it meant unleashing a buzzy new program every month or two that had to be consumed all in one go so you could chat about it around the workplace watercooler—and its digital descendants, Twitter and Facebook—lest you feel left out.

The flood of television programming from Netflix et al. since 2013, and the shotgun-blast manner in which new seasons are released, have combined to make it virtually impossible to keep up with everything worth watching. As recently as 15 years ago, a discerning TV watcher only needed to keep tabs on a handful of shows—a Sunday-night drama from HBO or AMC or Showtime; a Tuesday-night drama and a Thursday-night comedy from FX or maybe a broadcast network. But now it feels like there are nigh on infinite offerings from a nearly limitless number of channels. With thousands of hours of new TV coming out every year and an increasingly fractured marketplace demanding customers keep track of several different streaming services, how do we keep the truly excellent programming from being lost in the flood of mediocrity?

Today's foremost television critics, Matt Zoller Seitz and Alan Sepinwall, have begun answering that question over the last few years via a series of books. Sepinwall's *The*

GETTY IMAGES

Revolution Was Televised (2012) is a must-read history of TV running from the debut of HBO's *Oz* (an almost-forgotten trailblazer that deserves more respect than it has received) through AMC's emergence as a power player with *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad*. Seitz and Sepinwall have collected their recaps—brief critical summaries of TV episodes published online as quickly as possible after the episodes' initial airings—of those two shows in, respectively, *Mad Men Carousel: The Complete Critical Companion* (2015) and *Breaking Bad 101: The Complete Critical Companion* (2017). The two critics are teaming up for a similar *Sopranos* collection, scheduled to hit shelves in January 2019.

Sepinwall and Seitz also joined forces for *TV (The Book): Two Experts Pick the Greatest American Shows of All Time* (2016), and that volume is of more interest to us here. In that book, the two most important thinkers about TV take on the tricky task of looking at several generations of an evolving art form and deciding not only which individual works deserve to be remembered for their excellence but also *what criteria* we should consider when making such a determination. Sepinwall and Seitz wrestle with a show's consistency and innovation, its influence on the medium as a whole and its greatness at its peak, and the quality of its acting and storytelling. They contend with the problems all critics face when trying to figure out just what is worthy of passing on to our descendants for their edification (and entertainment)—when trying, that is, to determine a canon.

It is worth taking a moment to pause and consider what a canon is and how it takes shape. Outside of the religious context, a canon is a set of artistic or philosophical works recognized for their cultural authority. Although it was hardly the first, perhaps the best-known attempt to determine a canon for Western literature and philosophy was the Great Books project led by Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer Adler and published and sold by Encyclopædia Britannica starting in the 1950s. Dwight Macdonald, scourge

of the middlebrow, noted how the physical scale of the project seemingly gave it figurative heft: "Simply issuing a list would have been enough if practicality were the only consideration, but a list can easily be revised, and it lacks the totemistic force of a five-foot, hundred-pound array of books." The canon, in this commercialistic conception, is as much for display as it is for reading and discussing, an expanse of prose and poetry that stretches across the mantle.

The very concept of the canon is

canon: "What shall the individual who still desires to read attempt to read, this late in history?" Bloom's concern was with the primacy of aesthetic beauty as opposed to ideological imperatives; he believed it to be the responsibility of the critic to point people to what is best rather than what is most "important" in some political sense:

If we were literally immortal, or even if our span were doubled to seven score of years, say, we could give up all argument about canons. But we have an interval only, and



inherently exclusive—some works are in, some are out—and so some opponents argue that canon-talk reflects bias and power, while defenders of the canon insist that its fixity is vital to cultural transmission. But as John Searle put it in an essay for the *New York Review of Books* in 1990, at a time when fights over political correctness were roiling college campuses, "In my experience there never was, in fact, a fixed 'canon'; there was rather a certain set of tentative judgments about what had importance and quality. Such judgments are always subject to revision, and in fact are being constantly revised." (Indeed, the makeup of even the Great Books set has changed over the years.)

In a 1994 book about the Western literary canon, Harold Bloom succinctly summarized the "true question" of the

then our place knows us no more, and stuffing that interval with bad writing, in the name of whatever social justice, does not seem to me to be the responsibility of the literary critic.

Yet in a 2013 essay for the *New Yorker*, Sam Sacks lamented that "artistic brilliance is no longer the most important determining factor" in what is considered a classic. "Authors are anointed not because they are great (although many of them are) but because they are important," he writes. "That's why prose-toilers like George Orwell and Aldous Huxley are securely fixed in the canon while masters such as Frank O'Connor and Eudora Welty could easily be left out."

The ways in which an artist or thinker or a specific work can enter or leave a canon can be complicated

and mysterious. As British critic Frank Kermode notes in an essay on the reclamation of Botticelli from the mists of history, “The oblivion into which this painter fell soon after his death was so close to being total that one might suppose it could be dissipated only by some extraordinary development in the history of taste. And that is what occurred.” Working through the account of Botticelli’s reemergence as an eminent painter, Kermode highlights the distinction between “opinion” (I like *this*!) and “knowledge” (here are the historical

like *Riceyman Steps*, recede into the distance, Kermode suggests it has to do with Joyce’s novel not only having a “high value” but also standing up to “an almost rabbinical minuteness of comment and speculation,” granting it “perpetual modernity, guaranteed by continuous and fertile interpretation.”

While I imagine that some of these critics would be surprised to find their arguments about the canon applied to televisual works, their ideas align nicely with Sepinwall and Seitz’s thinking on the subject of what qualifies a work for canonical sta-

Seitz’s write-up of *Louie*, standup comedian Louis C.K.’s groundbreaking sitcom on FX, judged by the pair to be the 18th-greatest television show of all time:

Television history is filled with sitcoms driven by stand-up comics who had a vision (or thought they did); without exception they all chose a format and tone and more or less stuck with them for the duration. *The Bob Newhart Show*, *The Cosby Show*, and *Everybody Loves Raymond*, to name three influential sitcoms fronted by stand-ups, were pretty much the same at the end of their runs as they were at the start. Others, such as *Roseanne* and *Seinfeld*, evolved but never lost touch with their essence. *Louie* morphed from week to week, episode to episode, sometimes minute to minute. In doing so, it translated the thought processes of stand-up comedy into cinematic terms, and in a way that that was new to commercial television.

Seitz and Sepinwall are keenly aware of how business and technological considerations have affected the aesthetic dimensions of television, as we see in their write-up of *I Love Lucy*, their 8th-greatest show. Not only did Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz perfect the three-camera sitcom—a method of filming that captures the stage from three different angles (often in front of a live studio audience), from which editors could piece together the funniest takes; it is what you envision when you think “network sitcom,” from *The Big Bang Theory* to *Seinfeld* to *Cheers* to *All in the Family* and on and on backwards through time—they also filmed in 35mm. “High-quality celluloid didn’t just produce a more attractive picture than anything coming through TV sets in 1951, it produced an image that would remain viable even as TVs got better over the course of many decades, while kinescopes of shows like *The Honey-mooners*, *The Ernie Kovacs Show*, and *Playhouse 90* started to look as if they’d been filmed through a fish tank,” Seitz and Sepinwall explain. Compared to kinescopes—recordings of a program captured by pointing a camera at a TV that was broadcasting the show



TV critics Matt Zoller Seitz and Alan Sepinwall with Seth Meyers, October 31, 2016

antecedents, the artistic flourishes, and all the ways *this* differs from *that*), arguing that entry into the canon obliterates the distinction between the two. Botticelli largely disappeared, was rescued from anonymity by fans, and entered the canon only after academics created a body of knowledge showing why he deserved to be there and the ways in which he was distinct from his peers.

Kermode argues that what makes an artist worthy of inclusion in the canon is how contemporary he manages to feel through the ages, how we can adapt the masters and their work to our current critical conversation. Musing on why *Ulysses* endures while other works from the same period,

tus. “Milton, like Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare before him, and like Wordsworth after him, simply overwhelmed the tradition and subsumed it. That is the strongest test for canonicity,” Bloom wrote. “The deepest truth about secular canon-formation is that it is performed by neither critics nor academics, let alone politicians. Writers, artists, composers themselves determine canons, by bridging between strong precursors and strong successors.”

TV: *The Book* is at least in part an exercise in discovering and traversing those bridges, mapping out the sitcoms and dramas that diverged from what came before and paved new ground to go forward upon. Consider

live—*I Love Lucy*'s high-quality, long-lasting archive paid double dividends since Desilu Productions held onto the rights of each episode, a move that would earn the company a fortune in syndication dollars.

While reading Sepinwall and Seitz's book, I can't help but wonder how many of the beloved programs they discuss will be drowned in the flood of subsequent programming. The sheer volume of new shows—the thousands of hours of new *stuff*—and the new distribution models make it difficult for older shows to stay in circulation and for excellent new shows to impress themselves upon the national consciousness. Why would I watch an episode of *The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, Netflix's hilarious sitcom, more than once when I have 10 hours of *The Handmaid's Tale* to catch up on? Aren't I just wasting my time if I flip on TBS and zonk out to 25-year-old *Seinfeld* episodes? What would possibly be the point of watching a random episode of *ER* or *Hill Street Blues* or *Miami Vice*?

At the risk of blaspheming, one of the shows I worry about most is *The Simpsons*. Like any good xennial, I love the first 10 seasons of the show. (Well, the third through the ninth, anyway.) I can toss off quotations from Homer and Marge and Lisa and Bart with the best of them; I have hailed our new insect overlords more times than I can remember; I have often said “Boo-urns” and started No Homers Clubs and complained to Unkie Moe about the soda being too cold (it makes my teef hurt). Some of you may understand the gibberish above; if you do, it's probably because you've seen these episodes repeatedly in syndication. For several decades, the syndication model provided repetition that helped create a common cultural currency. That model has now weakened—syndication has become less appealing to audiences—as the marketplace has been flooded with new programs and as new technologies have created new viewing options. This will likely make the sitcom almost obsolete as anything other than a day-of laugh-delivery

device. *The Simpsons* at the peak of its powers is a show rooted in its time, one that relies as heavily on pop-culture references as it does on repeated lines of clever dialogue becoming inside jokes among initiates. Strip the show from its moment—as future audiences will experience it—and take away the repetition needed to impress the cleverness of its wordplay on viewers, and what are you left with? Something that lasts? A masterpiece that rewards critical scrutiny for future generations? Or something that fades into the ether, a pleasant memory for those born

A major difficulty that arises when thinking about which TV shows will be of interest to future generations is their length. Take, for instance, 'The Wire.' What else might you do with the 60 hours required to see the whole series?

between 1970 and 1990, and perhaps an artifact of interest to scholars studying the 1990s, but few others?

Another difficulty in determining a canon is the need to separate mere nostalgia from true greatness, and Seitz and Sepinwall strive to avoid letting their childhood favorites cloud their critical judgments. Despite watching “so religiously that we can identify a particular *Brady Bunch* or *Little House on the Prairie* episode in under ten seconds,” neither show makes the top 100.

Think about the shows that populate your own personal best-of list. How much of the urge to include *The Simpsons* or *Seinfeld* comes from familiarity? Would the entirety of your list simply draw from programs that were

on the air when you were watching TV? Whereas an all-time-top-10 movie list compiled by a person under the age of 40 would likely contain at least a few films made before he or she was born—*Citizen Kane* or *The Godfather/The Godfather Part II* or *The Wizard of Oz* or *Vertigo* or *A Clockwork Orange* or *On the Waterfront*—how many TV shows that aired before 1978 would make the cut? Some of you might perhaps pick *I Love Lucy* or *The Twilight Zone*—but even then, these are likely shows you watched over and over again in syndication growing up. Familiarity, in this case, breeds respect.

Another major difficulty that arises when thinking about which TV shows will last and be of interest to future generations is their length. Take, for instance, *The Wire*. A relatively compact series at 60 episodes over five seasons, the show would take about two-and-a-half days to watch from start to finish, assuming one forgoes sleep. Of course, no one who is employed (and no one who has a family) really binges like that; at two episodes a day, you can get through the whole thing in a month. That's still a heavy commitment; two months, frankly, seems likelier. But what else could you have done with those 60 hours? According to HowLongToReadThis.com, which measured my reading pace to be a glacial 259 words per minute, I could finish *War and Peace* (21 hours and 15 minutes), *Don Quixote* (16 hours and 16 minutes), *Moby-Dick* (12 hours and 36 minutes), and still have plenty of time to squeeze in *Crime and Punishment* (7 hours and 3 minutes). Alternatively, I could read much of Kingsley Amis's and Graham Greene's fiction—the stuff worth reading, anyway—in roughly the same span of time.

What about movies? With 60 hours, you could watch the entirety of Stanley Kubrick's oeuvre—and then watch it again to pick up on all the nuances you missed the first time around. You could watch the first 27 entries on the American Film Institute's 100 greatest American films of all time (more, if you skipped some of the lengthier, plodding works like *Gone with the Wind*). You could watch the last quarter-century or so of films to win Best

Picture at the Oscars. You could take a tour through world cinema, watching the best of Akira Kurosawa and François Truffaut and Lindsay Anderson and Michelangelo Antonioni.

You could undertake any of those horizon-expanding artistic adventures—or you could watch one program that ran for a few years on HBO.

My point is not to denigrate *The Wire* in comparison to Dostoyevsky or Hitchcock—its fourth season is as defining a portrait of modern American poverty as any art form has managed to capture—so much as it is to bare a brutal truth of our recent glut of brilliant television: It takes a *long time* to consume most of the master works produced over the last 20 years. In the moment, as the series is unfolding, this length can be a boon. “Television’s great narrative advantage over film had always been time,” Sepinwall wrote in the afterword to *Breaking Bad 101*:

A movie, no matter how perfect, is a compact, finite experience that begins and ends over the course of the same evening. Watch it again and again, and you may notice something new each time, but the story itself will not change, nor will the character arcs. Even the greatest of films is a one-night stand, where a TV series is a relationship—between the creators and the characters, and then between the characters and the audience—that can last years, with changes both subtle and inescapable along the way.

This is true enough. But it’s only true *in the moment*. It’s only true while the show in question is a going concern, while we are watching in real time, while we are experiencing a program as a community, while we use it as a way to kill time with the coworkers in lieu of discussing the weather, while we hop online to hash out each and every moment from the preceding hour of programming to mine details from the text and speculate on what will happen next. As soon as a television series ends, it becomes a movie that’s dozens of hours long, almost always a piece of content too lengthy to think about consuming again, since there

are so many other dozens of hours of new experiences out there. (The fact that more than a dozen of the top 100 shows in *TV (The Book)*, a comprehensive guide to the best of the best, were watched only by either Seitz or Sepinwall speaks to just this problem.) To extend the metaphor Sepinwall offers above, the moment a show ends—the second the closing credits roll on the series finale—a TV show becomes an ex. An ex you may have had a grand time with, mind you. An ex who possibly helped you grow. But an ex nonetheless, one who has consumed an enormous portion of your finite time on this plane of existence.

More importantly, for those of us who discover a show after the fact—once it is available for streaming in its entirety and after its ideas and ideologies have been picked over by the rest of the world—that relationship, the ups and downs and subtle changes, is never there at all. Unlike books or films, the best way to experience a show is in something approximating real time along with a community of other watchers.

So is there any point to determining a TV canon at all? There certainly are excellent TV shows, especially relative to other TV shows. There are TV shows that are produced with artistic genius and beauty and that shed light on timeless truths about the human condition. But given the nature of the medium, will these achievements last? So many great shows will slip into oblivion unloved and unmourned. For instance, I would love to share my appreciation of *The Shield* with more people. But I’m a realist. I am fully aware that asking most people to sit down and watch 88 episodes of a cop drama, albeit a very good cop drama with one of the few great endings of this era of narrative television, is pointless. There’s not enough time.

Even if we had a surfeit of seconds—even “if we were literally immortal,” as Bloom wrote—it’s worth considering whether *any* television from today will be watched for entertainment by future generations. Just because TV is a going con-

cern now doesn’t mean it always will be. Without dipping too far into the realm of science-fiction, one doesn’t have to be too imaginative to conjure up a future in which television, as an artistic medium, withers and fades, replaced by YouTube vloggers and competitive gamers and eventually by increasingly immersive virtual reality. “Most commercial music disappears when the generation that made it dies,” music historian Ted Gioia explains to Chuck Klosterman in his book *But What If We’re Wrong?* “After each generation dies, only a few songs and artists enjoy a lingering fame.” That low level of recognition is held by only a few folks here and there. One wonders if prestige TV is, like any popular genre, little more than a fad that will fade as its fans die off.

Reading is fundamentally a solitary endeavor; great texts have a timelessness as each generation wrestles with the messages within. Films work well both in group settings—with big, raucous audiences of strangers coming together to gasp at a horror flick or guffaw at a comedy—and also as individual works to sit with at home and study, absorb, learn from. If medium and message truly are synchronous, then maybe television is simply something that only really works in the moment. Maybe it is inherently fleeting and flighty. Maybe “streaming” is a more apt word for our current mode of consuming television than we realized: Like a creek in your backyard it’s always there but permanently impermanent, always different, with new, fresh droplets running through it. We don’t miss the water that has disappeared forever; we just like looking at what’s there now, gurgling along. Sometimes fuller, sometimes emptier, the flow is always the same yet ever changing.

Hey, you know who never changes? Larry David. Did you happen to catch the new season of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*? Man, it was great to have ol’ Lar’ back on the small screen after so many years away. He’s as cranky as ever, doing battle with life’s foibles. He really stuck it to the *Hamilton* guy, didn’t he? Say, did you see ... ♦

Dazzling Dendrites

Beholding the brain, in sketches

by the 'father of neuroscience.' BY AARON ROTHSTEIN

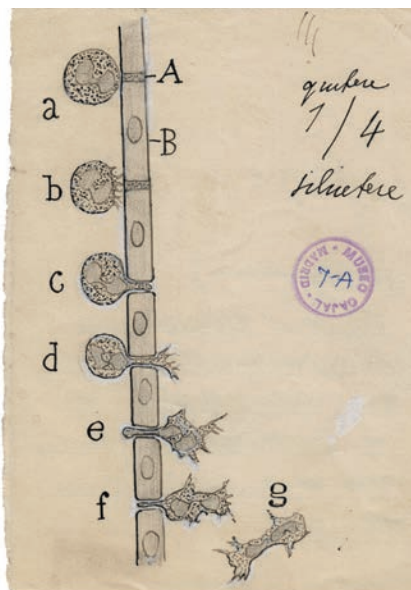
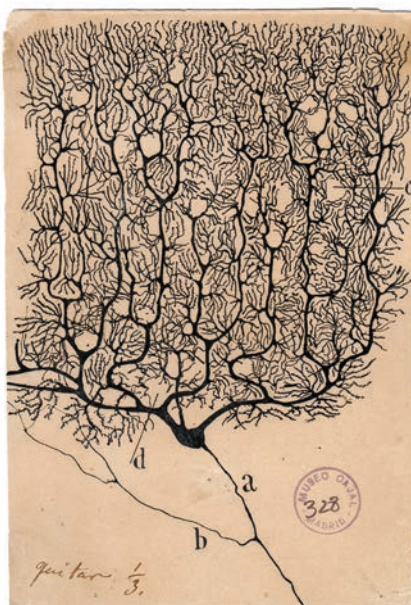
Until the 19th century, the relationship between the function and the physiology of the nervous system was largely a mystery. Physicians believed in the vital importance of the brain but knew little about its structure and purpose. For hundreds of years, conventional wisdom in medicine followed the second-century physician Galen in holding that certain *pneumata*, or bodily spirits, were stored in hollowed-out cavities in the brain (the anterior ventricles), and those spirits' motion around the body was necessary for seeing, hearing, tasting, and feeling.

Neuroscientific understanding made rapid strides in the 1800s. The Frenchmen Paul Broca, a surgeon, and Jean-Baptiste Bouillaud, a physician, both succeeded in linking specific parts of the brain to specific functions—for example, there is a part of the brain (now called Broca's area) that is known to be associated with speech.

But what was happening at the microscopic level? Sure, some locations in the brain seemed to control language, but what did that mean? Do cells send signals to initiate speech? What do those cells look like and how might they be connected? Answers to these questions would provide a huge leap forward in the progress of neuroscience.

That leap is in part attributable to the Spanish physician-artist Santiago Ramón y Cajal. Born in 1852, Cajal was the troublemaking son of a professor of anatomy; the father eventually persuaded the artistically inclined son to study medicine. Cajal served as a

The Beautiful Brain
The Drawings of Santiago Ramón y Cajal
Grey Art Gallery, NYU
through March 31



medical officer in the Spanish Army and eventually became an anatomy professor himself, conducting research focused on the nervous system. In order to elucidate the workings of the brain, he improved upon an existing cell-staining technique and then studied neurons (brain and nerve cells) under the microscope. Cajal found that spaces exist between neurons—what we today call synapses—and recognized certain patterns in the way neurons line up next to each other. Consequently, he could tell in which direction along the cell signals traveled.

The importance of these two discoveries cannot be overstated. Treatments available for seizures, autoimmune diseases, depression, schizophrenia, anxiety, and more depend on the synapses between neurons; drugs act on receptors and chemicals in this space. Moreover, diagnostic tests for nerve damage lean on our knowledge of the direction of neuronal signals. It is for these discoveries that Cajal was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1906. And his ability to sketch what he saw when he peered through his microscope aided his research immensely.

Now, 80 of Cajal's drawings are on display in an exhibition at New York University's Grey Art Gallery. They are mesmerizing. One of Cajal's most famous illustrations shows a Purkinje neuron from the human cerebellum (the part of the brain involved in coordination); dozens of root-like projections emerge from the cell body, filling the entire page, searching for their companion cells beyond the borders of the sheet as they sway on the parchment. Cajal wrote of this neuron, "In our parks are there any trees more elegant and luxurious than the Purkinje cell from the cerebellum ...?"

In another image, a white blood cell migrates across a blood vessel in successive stages, the corpulent cell projecting tentacles to the vessel wall, burrowing through it and pulling itself over to the other side, misshapen but

Above, a Purkinje neuron from the human cerebellum, 1899; below, white blood cell migration across a blood vessel, 1918.

Aaron Rothstein, M.D., is a neurology resident at the NYU School of Medicine and the author of the Practicing Medicine blog.



Glial cells in the cerebral cortex of a man who suffered from paralysis, 1925

otherwise unharmed. Of an event like this, Cajal wrote in his autobiography, “I remember that once I spent twenty hours continuously at the microscope watching the movements of a sluggish leukocyte in its laborious efforts to escape from a blood capillary.”

There is more than just beauty in these illustrations. Cajal meant for them to appear with his scientific publications. He labeled them with letters or arrows to point out structures of interest. They remain so accurate that many will appear familiar to anyone who has perused recent neuroanatomy textbooks. Moreover, some parts of the images seem to have been playfully inserted by their creator. In one sketch of cells from the cerebral cortex of a man suffering from paralysis, a ghoulish face replaces the body of a neuron and peers down at the other damaged cells.

Despite the wonderful drawings on display, it is hard to make sense of each image’s purpose in the exhibition’s larger story. Although it is divided into sections—“Cells of the Brain,” “Sensory Systems,” “Development and Pathology,” “Neuronal Pathways,” and “Seeing the Beautiful

Brain Today”—these divisions seem somewhat arbitrary. Why are these considered separate sections? After all, sensory systems extend into brain cells, and development and pathology occur in brain cells. And what’s on offer in the sections doesn’t differ all that much. In the first section, one can view a drawing of a pigeon’s Purkinje neuron; in the second, one can see the retina of the lizard. The exhibition neglects to guide the visitor with a coherent narrative.

Furthermore, the last section, “Seeing the Beautiful Brain Today,” feels stilted and out of place. It contains more specialized images made possible by today’s tools and techniques—magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), electron micrography, and so on—which offer remarkable ways of viewing the brain as a whole or in various parts. These are invaluable for modern medicine and some of them are quite striking. But as *images*, as objects worth beholding and critiquing for their aesthetic value, they pale in beauty relative to Cajal’s pencil-and-paper works.

In his book *Advice for a Young Investigator*, Cajal argues that art and sci-

ence should be happily merged: The investigator ought to possess

an artistic temperament that impels him to search for and admire the number, beauty, and harmony of things; and—in the struggle for life that ideas create in our minds—a sound critical judgment that is able to reject the rash impulses of daydreams in favor of those thoughts most faithfully embracing objective reality.

Artistic and scientific ways of thinking naturally balance each other, Cajal claims. But art without science is dissatisfying, subjective, and ephemeral:

Art depends on popular judgments about the universe, and is nourished by the limited expanse of sentiment. ... In contrast, science was barely touched upon by the ancients, and is as free from the inconsistencies of fashion as it is from the fickle standards of taste. ... And let me stress that this conquest of ideas is not subject to fluctuations of opinion, to the silence of envy, or to the caprices of fashion that today repudiate and detest what yesterday was praised as sublime.

This is a chilling and vicious attack on art practiced without the sciences. And it is shortsighted to make such an accusation about the arts when the scientific enterprise is, despite Cajal’s optimism about it, sometimes subject to the same caprices.

Still, if he romanticized science at the expense of art, Cajal was certainly right about the potential to merge the two. His drawings exemplify this. They go hand-in-hand with his discoveries, beautifying and clarifying them.

Yet they didn’t clarify everything. For all our knowledge about the nervous system and for all our high-tech imaging capabilities, even today we must sometimes feel like Cajal or even Galen: ignorant, overwhelmed, and saddened by what we still don’t know about, for example, incurable nervous-system afflictions like Lou Gehrig’s disease or Parkinson’s disease. We must hope that future creative insights—perhaps via a marriage of art and science like that achieved by Cajal—will push back against these terrible unknowns.

Lights, Camera, Tesseractation

The Wrinkle in Time movie doesn't share the book's transcendental purpose. BY JOHN PODHORETZ



Oprah Winfrey as Mrs. Which and Storm Reid as Meg Murry in *A Wrinkle in Time*

Rejected by more than two dozen publishers in the early 1960s, *A Wrinkle in Time* was itself a work of its own time and entirely out of time—a sophisticated and original intellectual coming-of-age story featuring speculative science fiction, anti-Communist dystopia, and Christian hermeneutics. There had never been anything quite like it. And yet the wild success of the book didn't help Madeleine L'Engle establish a reputation in literary circles. While these days a J.K. Rowling novel for adults is considered a significant publishing event, the opposite was true in L'Engle's case. Though she wrote several impressive novels for adults in *Wrinkle's* aftermath, particu-

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A Wrinkle in Time
Directed by Ava DuVernay



larly the complex and raw *Love Letters* from 1966, she was given short shrift because she was the author of children's books—nor did her publisher think to use her success as a spur to sales in the wider market.

It's worth remembering that when L'Engle wrote this book, children's literature was considered a lowly thing in the precincts of American publishing and hardly worthy of note if your name were anything other than E.B. White. Consider the fact that at the same moment, Beverly Cleary was publishing books in her now-immortal series about ordinary middle-class children

living on Klickitat Street in Portland, Oregon—and still had to labor to make a living by writing paperback novels for hire set in the (as we say now) *Leave It to Beaver* universe.

L'Engle was also concerned with questions of religious faith (*Love Letters* centers on the 18th-century Portuguese nun Mariana Alcoforado), which were, to put it mildly, of no interest among the cognoscenti. She was that rarest of Americans, a deeply serious and rigorously intellectual theological Episcopalian. She was also classically didactic, viewing her role as a tale-teller to children as an educative one (in the 1960s, she was an English teacher at a New York City private school). Mrs. Who, one of the three angels who help guide the children in *A Wrinkle in Time*, speaks almost entirely in quotations—from Goethe and Shakespeare and other giants of Western civilization whose names L'Engle might well have been introducing her young readers to.

All of this makes *A Wrinkle in Time* sound boring, and it is anything but. It's a crazy salad of a book, anchored in its dissatisfied, wounded, angry, indelible 12-year-old heroine Meg Murry. Every female protagonist of a novel for teenagers that followed *A Wrinkle in Time* is a version of Meg, and for good reason. Her beloved prodigy of a brother wounds her by declaring she is “neither fish nor fowl.” L'Engle has us look at every aspect of this wild book—from speculative physics to life in a totalitarian state—through Meg's frustrated, all-too-human eyes. And after all the grandeur, and the exploration of very abstract and advanced ideas, it is Meg who grasps and applies the simplest and most powerful rebuttal to all the fancy talk: love.

This is why *A Wrinkle in Time* went on to sell 10 million copies and will be in print as long as there is print. It is a book about science in which science is both joined with and humbled by the divine. More than any other children's book—even the Narnia volumes—it is a novel of ideas. But it is a novel about how ideas are not enough.

You can mark the difference between L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*

COURTESY OF DISNEY

and the \$100 million Disney movie version of it with the fact that Mrs. Who (Mindy Kaling) quotes not Goethe but Khalil Gibran; not Aristotle in the original Greek but Lin-Manuel Miranda; not Shakespeare but Maya Angelou. A lesson is being taught here by screenwriters Jennifer Lee and Jeff Stockwell and director Ava DuVernay, but it's not L'Engle's lesson, which is about the transmission of high culture.

Conservative critics have already complained that the movie fails because it removes the Christianity and replaces it with a kind of female-empowerment agenda. It's true this has happened, but that's a reflection of the movie's central problem, not its source. *A Wrinkle in Time* is literally a transcendental adventure story, and Lee, Stockwell, and DuVernay don't seem to have a transcendental bone in their bodies.

Take the moment I remember vividly from the first time I read the book at the age of 9, when the idea of space travel across the fifth dimension is explained—not in words, but in a drawing that shows an ant crawling across a piece of wrinkled fabric. It was thrilling. The depiction of the wrinkle in time should be a natural for the movie, a highlight moment; but it takes place in the midst of a slideshow at a scientific conference and is not even shown in close-up. This playful, mind-expanding aspect of L'Engle's book is lost entirely.

Still, the movie isn't bad, which I expected it would be from the godawful trailers Disney made from it. That's due in part to the inspired casting of a young actress named Storm Reid as Meg. She is perfect, which I can't say for most of the performances here—save a turn by Zach Galifianakis that brings a needed bit of levity to the sagging middle of the movie.

In the end, *A Wrinkle in Time* is pretty faithful to everything about the book but its animating spirit and purpose. It's more an illustrated and bowdlerized version of L'Engle than a violation. Watching it is akin to reading *Tales from Shakespeare* instead of Shakespeare itself. It's easier. ♦

BCA

Ill Repute

What we talk about when we talk about reputation.

BY JAMES BOWMAN

Reputation

What It Is and Why It Matters

by Gloria Origgi

translated by Stephen Holmes

and Noga Arikha

Princeton, 272 pp., \$29.95

Suppose, for a moment, that you are a young person with no more knowledge of what the world was like before you were born than most young people nowadays. And suppose, further, that out of idle curiosity you took it into your head to read a really old book like, say, Edith Wharton's *Age of Innocence* (1920). As you read, you come upon a passage in which all the friends of one of the main characters, the Countess Olenska, are talking in hushed tones about her "reputation." Being a fairly intelligent person, you are vaguely aware that the sense in which these people are using that word is slightly unfamiliar to you. So you look up and see on the shelf just above you a book titled *Reputation* by a social scientist, presumably of some reputation herself, named Gloria Origgi. Here, surely, you think, is a volume that will help to explain what those old-timey New Yorkers meant when they talked about a woman's reputation.

Turns out you would be wrong. The history of the word and its uses appear to be matters of very little interest to Origgi, an Italian living in France and working as a senior researcher at the Institut Jean Nicod of the National Center for Scientific Research in Paris. Her vision of her subject is a wider one—indeed, a universal one, transcending particular languages and cultures. It is what she would no doubt call "scientific." And, like most science, it must be supposed to be difficult to understand. "Reputation is shrouded in mystery," says Origgi right at the beginning, adding that, in her book, she has

"tried to give shape and substance to a highly elusive concept."

You, the intelligent but ignorant young person, may not know that the "concept" wasn't the least bit mysterious or elusive to Edith Wharton's first readers. They knew exactly what was meant by the word in her pages—and virtually anywhere else where they would have been likely to encounter it. They also knew that it had different meanings depending on whether it was applied to a man or a woman, for instance, or in a context of big business or of the lawless West with cowboys and gunfighters—but there was no "mystery" about any of these meanings. Ordinary people in those days would also have been aware of the word's specialized uses in their own personal, business, or professional lives or their own communities. None of these presented any problems of understanding. For learning those different meanings was considered a normal and necessary part of growing up, in this or any other culture at the time.

But what is reputation when taken out of that cultural context? This is the question that Origgi is trying to answer. No wonder she calls it a mystery! The source of the "mystery" lies in two conceptual mistakes: first, that there is a sort of Platonic ideal of "reputation" quite apart from the word as it has actually been used and, second, that describing this ideal "reputation" involves and is even to a considerable

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extent limited to describing a putative process of verification. What mainly interests Origgi about reputation is not the thing itself but how to tell to what it corresponds (or does not correspond) in reality—which seems to me an entirely separate matter, and a mystery that she herself recognizes when she writes that “there is no humanly accessible ultimate reality lying beyond or behind the experienced interconnection of events.”

Origgi’s observations and conclusions about reputation are often cast in the language of such fields as evolutionary biology and information theory. She seems to have Google’s search algorithms in mind when she writes that “the essentially communicative nature of reputation and its centrality to social order become clear once we see it as *an opinion we have of the more or less authoritative opinions formed by others*—that is to say, as a second-order opinion, as something we believe we must believe” (italics in original).

A few pages later, she stumbles while trying to move from opinions to facts: She admits to having been the victim of an “informational cascade” about the first debate between Mitt Romney and President Obama in 2012 that had led her to believe that Romney had “won” and Obama had “lost” the debate, and then confidently asserts that now she knows better, that the victor and vanquished were the other way around. But how can she tell that she isn’t just the victim of another informational cascade the other way? Apparently, she can exempt herself from the general rule and adopt an opinion simply because it is true.

Also, as one who continues to hold the opinion of the debate that Origgi held at first, I rather resent being told by someone purporting to know The Truth that I only hold the opinion I do because, unlike her, I have been hoodwinked by some personal or impersonal manipulator of information. It may, indeed, be true that my opinions are second-order ones, but it is impossible for anyone else to know that who

may also—as who may not?—have only second-order opinions herself. Good manners would seem to require that we respect each other enough to grant the benefit of the doubt as to whether the opinions we express are actually our own.

The final four chapters mercifully leave theory behind as Origgi descends from the scientific mountaintop to deal with such reputational specifics as the attempt to turn reputation to commercial uses on the web, the reputation of wine as established by self-described experts, and the means of producing and manipulating reputation in academia and politics. In all these areas of our lives, reputa-



tion has taken on new meanings and importance in recent years, mainly because we have learned how to monetize it—which also means how to manipulate it to our own advantage. Back in Madame Olenska’s day, reputation was not readily susceptible to manipulation, which was the fundamental truth, the incorrigible reality out of which Edith Wharton created her work of art—partly in order to show how that reality had changed between the 1880s and the 1920s. Perhaps, along with that outmoded idea of reputation, we have lost the ability to create such art.

If so, Origgi herself helps to show us the reason why, at the only point in the book where there is a look backward at the cultural history of reputation. This comes with an analysis of a scene from Verdi’s *La Traviata* in

which the courtesan Violetta is visited by the father of her lover, Alfredo, who asks her to give him up on the grounds that Alfredo’s sister’s fiancé and his family are scandalized by their relationship. *Ah, comprendo*, says Violetta, “as if,” in Origgi’s words, “the connection between her reputation and that of Alfredo’s sister were self-evident. And yet this connection is illusory. It appears only because of a series of commitments to unwritten, intangible norms.”

Only! In our scientific age, what need have we for “unwritten, intangible norms”—or commitments, for that matter? In other words, those old-timers with their “illusory” ideas about reputation simply made a mistake. Strip away those norms, as Origgi does, and we are left with a more scientific, and therefore more correct, view of the matter. If only Violetta had known that, in reality as described by science, “her reputation cannot ... seriously blemish that of his sister,” the noble act of self-sacrifice that follows, like the opera itself and the novel on which it was based, presumably need never have happened.

Despite this brief glance backwards, Origgi isn’t really interested in the past except insofar as it was on the point of giving way to our own time. Now even to know something about the culture that Edith Wharton was adumbrating—already old-fashioned and beginning to fade from memory at the time she wrote her novel—has become paradoxically disreputable if it implies imaginative acceptance of its norms. This must be what prevents Origgi from seeing that its ultimate demise has left fossils in our language, in words like “reputation,” which if they have become “shrouded in mystery” is only because we have deliberately forgotten their original context. Now we imagine, or at least she imagines, that we can treat these fossils as objects for scientific analysis in isolation from their historical context. It is as if we were to treat actual fossils as objects for chemical analysis without reference to the now-dead organisms of which they are the remains. ♦

Roaming the Cosmos

Stephen Hawking, 1942-2018.

BY JOHN GRIBBIN

Much as the name Tiger Woods is familiar to people who do not follow golf, so the name Stephen Hawking will be familiar even to people who care little about physics. His death on March 14 provoked an outpouring of eulogies of the kind usually reserved for rock stars and former presidents. His scientific work fully justifies such acclaim, quite apart from the inspirational impact his fame had in encouraging young people to become scientists themselves.

The story begins half a century ago, when Hawking was a doctoral student at the University of Cambridge. He was working on what then seemed a rather esoteric area of mathematical physics, applying the equations of Einstein's general theory of relativity to the way massive objects collapse under their own weight. This was *before* such objects were dubbed "black holes," a name popularized by the physicist John Wheeler in 1967, and a decade before astronomical observations proved that black holes exist by measuring their gravitational influence on companion stars. Nobody except a few theorists took the idea seriously in the mid-1960s, and it was just the kind of tricky but possibly pointless exercise to give a doctoral candidate. A little earlier, another young English physicist, Roger Penrose, had proved that such objects must, if Einstein's theory was correct, collapse all the way down to a point of infinite density—what is called a singularity, a breakdown in the geometry of time and space. Nobody

worried too much about this as such spacetime singularities would be hidden inside black holes. But Hawking took Penrose's work and extended it to a description of the whole universe.

A black hole is an object collapsing to a singularity. But if you reverse the equations, you get a mathematical description of a universe expand-

One implication of Einstein's work was that black holes must collapse all the way down to a 'singularity,' a breakdown in the geometry of time and space. Hawking took the idea and extended it to a description of the whole universe.

ing away from a singularity. Hawking and Penrose together proved that our expanding universe had been born in a singularity at the beginning of time, if Einstein's general theory of relativity is the correct description of the universe. While they were completing their work, observational astronomers discovered the background radiation that fills all of space and is explained as the leftover energy from the super-dense fireball at the beginning of time. So what started out as an esoteric piece of mathematical research became a major contribution to one of the hottest topics in science in the 1970s. It is this work, updated with more observations, which makes

it possible to say that the universe was born when time began 13.8 billion years ago—that the Big Bang really happened. And, of course, Hawking got his Ph.D.

Hawking moved from explaining the birth of the universe to explaining the death of black holes. These got their name because the gravitational pull of a black hole is so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape from it. In 1970, everyone thought that this meant a black hole was forever. The unobservable singularity is surrounded by a spherical surface known as an event horizon, which lets anything in, but nothing—not even light—out. What Hawking realized was that the surface area of this event horizon must always increase, as more things are swallowed by the hole—or at the very least stay the same if it never swallows anything. He showed that this is linked with the concept of entropy in thermodynamics (the study of heat and motion). Entropy is a measure of the amount of disorder in some set of things. For example, an ice cube floating in a glass of water is a more ordered arrangement than the liquid water left in the glass when the ice cube melts, so the entropy in the glass increases as the ice melts.

Entropy always increases (or at best stays the same), like the area of a black hole. This means that information is being lost as things get simpler—there is more complexity, and so more information, in a mixture of ice and water than in water alone. Hawking showed, following a suggestion from the physicist Jacob Bekenstein, that the area of a black hole is a measure of its entropy. This means that anything that falls into a black hole is scrambled up and lost, like the melting ice cube. There is no record left—no information—about what it was that went in. He had found a link between one of the greatest theories of 19th-century physics—thermodynamics—and one of the greatest theories of 20th-century physics—the general theory of relativity.

Hawking didn't stop there.

Entropy is related to temperature. If the area of a black hole is a

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Hawking floating like an astronaut on a zero-gravity flight in 2007

measure of entropy, then each black hole should have a temperature. But hot things radiate energy—and nothing can escape from a black hole. Hawking tried to find a flaw in the paradox, a mathematical loophole, but failed. Having set out to prove that black holes did not have temperature, he ended up proving the opposite. Like any good scientist confronted by contrary evidence, Hawking changed his mind. As he stated boldly: “Black Holes Ain’t So Black.” The curious thing is that in order to explain how black holes could have temperature and radiate energy he had to bring in a third great theory of physics—quantum theory.

Hawking picked up on the prediction of quantum physics that in any tiny volume of space, pairs of particles, known as virtual pairs, can pop into existence out of nothing at all, provided they disappear almost immediately—they have to come in pairs to balance the quantum books. His insight was that in the region of space just outside a black hole, when a virtual pair appears, one of the particles can be captured by the black hole, while the other one steals energy from

the gravity of the hole and escapes into space. From outside, it looks as if particles are boiling away from the event horizon, stealing energy, which makes the black hole shrink. When the math confirmed that the idea was right, this became known as “Hawking radiation” and provided a way to measure the temperature of a black hole. Hawking had shown that quantum physics and relativity theory could be fruitfully combined to give new insights into the working of the universe. And the link with thermodynamics is still there. If the area of a black hole shrinks, entropy is, it seems, running in reverse. Physicists think this means that information that is seemingly lost when objects fall into a black hole is in principle recoverable from the radiation when it evaporates.

In 2013, 40 years after he discovered the radiation that bears his name, Hawking was awarded the Special Breakthrough Prize, worth \$3 million, for this theoretical work. It is not disparaging of his later life to say that he never came up with anything as profound again. This is akin to saying that after the general theory of relativity Einstein never came up with

anything as profound again. In later life, Hawking made contributions to the theory of inflation, which explains how the universe expanded away from a primordial seed, and studied the way in which that initial seed might have had its origin in a quantum fluctuation like the ones producing the virtual pairs outside black holes. And he espoused the idea of the multiverse, that our universe is just one bubble in spacetime, with many other bubbles existing in dimensions beyond our own. But these are all areas of science in which other researchers have made equally significant contributions. Just as Einstein’s place in the scientific pantheon is always linked with relativity theory, Hawking’s place will always be linked with his namesake radiation. It is an assured and honored place.

Readers will have noticed that I have not mentioned that for most of his life Hawking suffered from a debilitating illness, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or what is known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. He suffered greatly and he suffered bravely. But this, like the color of his eyes or his favorite rock band, is completely irrelevant to his achievements as a scientist. ♦

"The Secretary did not speak to the President and is unaware of the reason, but he is grateful for the opportunity to serve, and still believes strongly that public service is a noble calling."

***—Soon-to-be-former Undersecretary of State
Steve Goldstein, March 13, 2018***

PARODY



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PRESS BRIEFING BY PRESS SECRETARY SARAH SANDERS
James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

(continued)

and so we applaud the Sarris chocolate factory for taking advantage of the tax cut and hiring all those new workers. And we congratulate them on their new candy bar, the Donny Jr., which is both nutty and dense. I will now take your questions. Major?

Q: Sarah, is it true that Secretary Tillerson found out he was fired on Twitter?

MS. SANDERS: Well, the president did try sending him three emails but they all bounced back. Turns out it's "state.gov" and not "state.com." Also, there are two Ls in Tillerson. And it's Rex Tillerson, not Sex Tillerson.

Next question. John?

Q: Thank you, Sarah. Is it true the secretary tried texting the president but never heard back?

MS. SANDERS: I would strongly deny any allegation that the president ghosted him. It's more likely President Trump was simply away from his phone. It's not like he's on it all day sending out tweets. Sometimes he does forget to bring it with him to the bathroom. And sometimes he leaves it in the bathroom. In fact, he once left his phone in the men's room of a Perkins pancake house in Port St. Lucie. Luckily, a tourist returned it to us. We thanked her and wished her a safe flight back to Moscow. Next question. Jordan?

Q: Thanks, Sarah. So Secretary Tillerson had no prior warning he was going to be fired?

MS. SANDERS: I wouldn't say that. I mean, there were certainly signs. The fact that he had to check his own luggage at the airport in Lagos, Nigeria, should have told him something was up. And the fact that he got bumped from business class down to economy plus and that he had to call an Uber at Dulles was another sign. Honestly, you'd have to be a moron